■ BUSINESS/B1
BIR blames increased use of tax credit certificates for shortfall

■ METRO/A17
Grenade blast rocks private school in QC; no persons hurt

■ NEWS/A16
House still millionaires club; Rep. Cynthia Villar is the richest

■ ACROSS/A13
Town mayor suspected in journalist's murder stopped from leaving RP

Oracion's triumph thrills Palace, Lucban residents

WHEN LEO ORACION'S NEIGHBORS IN Lucban, Quezon, heard that he had reached the summit of Mt. Everest, they broke into applause.

"This is a big honor for Lucban," Peter Oracion, a brother of Leo's, said in Filipino over GMA-7's early evening newscast. "Of all the people in our town, only he had the most strength to climb Everest."

Even as a child, Leo was into sports like

Feast of crispy pata, lechon awaits Everest conquerors

By Christian V. Esguerra

EVERY DISH THEY MISSED IN SCALING THE world's tallest mountain they will find on the table when they get home.

Nothing short of a feast is being prepared for Leo Oracion and Cesar "Pantot" Lesaca by their colleagues in the First Philippine Mt. Everest Expedition (FPMEE). There will be crispy pata, lechon, adobo, rice, and, of course, bugis.

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, EARNEST VIEWS

Thursday, May 18, 2006 ★★ 6 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 139 P18

CONQUERED as of 3:30 p.m. Nepal time (3:30 p.m. here), May 17, 2006, (Photographed by Jeevan Rubin) Mount Everest is 8,848 meters (almost 29,000 feet) on the northern route to the peak.

Pinoy on top of the world

THE CONQUEROR. Leo Oracion, shows his mountaineering skills at Phuntagh Ara in Tibet, China, on April 7, making it to its summit of 24,737 feet where he planted the Philippine colors.

32-year-old Leo Oracion reaches Everest summit

By Alexis Papa

TRIUMPH AND DEEP EMOTION MARKED THE announcement yesterday of triathlete Leo Oracion that he had made it to the summit of Mt. Everest.

"The Philippine eagle has landed," was the radio message of the first Filipino to set foot on the roof of the world, according to Regie Pablo, team leader of the First Philippine Mt. Everest Expedition (FPMEE), of which Oracion is a member.

The 32-year-old Oracion reached the summit at 3:30 p.m. (3:30 p.m. Philippine time), Pablo said, citing information relayed in a phone call by the FPMEE's Arturo Valdez, who is at the Everest Base Camp (5,480 meters or 17,700 feet).

The adventure racer and lead climber for the FPMEE would have reached the peak earlier in the day but was reportedly bogged down by "traffic" on the trail.

He was among a 30-member team composed of Swiss, Koreans and American mountaineers as well as Sherpas, indigenous people who serve as guides and climbing partners.

The team was slowed down considerably upon reaching the Hillary Step, a 40-foot wall of rock around an hour to the summit.

"This is a big accomplishment for a country at sea level," Pablo told the location just after he got the news.

"We have no experience with alpine conditions; this is alien to us. It's like putting a Filipino on the moon. We also showed the other expeditions our positive values and outlook on things," he said.

Pablo also said Oracion's feat would put the Philippines on the international mountaineering map: "It's a boost to the repara-

PINOY/A4

Gov't posts rare budget surplus in April

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE GOVERNMENT POSTED A rare budget surplus in April, five times higher than the surplus posted a year earlier, as lower expenditures made up for weaker-than-expected income tax revenues.

Finance Secretary Margarita Teves yesterday said the government had a budget surplus of P17.6 billion in April, with revenues reaching P86 billion and expenditures amounting to P77.4 billion.

The budget surplus is the same month last year amounted to P3.3 billion.

Teves said the P58-billion budget deficit for the first four months was also below the shortfall of P68.2 billion a year earlier, putting the government on track in meeting its budget deficit target of P125 billion compared to last year's P194.8 billion.

The surplus boosted Philippine dollar bonds, with bonds due in 2031 and 2016 rising three-eighths of a point on expectations of sustained improvements in the

GOVT/A4

Impeach bid ushers in early Christmas

By Michael Lim Ubac

ADMINISTRATION ALLIES in the House of Representatives can't wait for the opposition to invite impeachment proceedings against President Macapagal-Arroyo, hoping it would usher in an early Christmas.

"I am in receipt of numerous requests from majority solons requesting to certain filing," said Rep. Boku Salapuddin in a telephone interview.

"They said that the

IMPEACH/A6

As chapel bells ring, Albay villagers 'evacuate'

By Edgar Aloja and Nikka Jesus Orbeta
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

STO. DOMINGO, ALBAY—CHAPEL bells rang at around 5:45 a.m. yesterday, sending dozens of villagers, including toothless elders and toddlers home on their fathers' shoulders, rushing out of their huts to high ground in Barangay Bañadero here.

The much-rumored warning order came after tremors from Guam to Singapore as two dozen Pacific Rim nations held an unprecedented drill organized after Asia's tsunami tsunami of 2004.

The massive drill, dubbed the "Exercise Pacific Wave 2006," was conducted over two days that saw several real earthquakes hit the region, including one north of New Zealand that triggered a re-

ALCHAPEL/A6

FROM GUAM TO THE PHILIPPINES, a week-tsunami warning sends villagers to higher ground during the unprecedented drill covering 24 Pacific and Asian nations. In Sto. Domingo, Albay, the elderly and toddlers on their father's shoulders crunch out of their huts as the village chapel bells sound an alarm for immediate evacuation.

Opus Dei in RP: It began with 3 Harvard boys

By Ma. Ceres P. Doyo
(First of two parts)

JESUS ESTANISLAO WAS PURsuing a doctorate degree in economics at Harvard University in 1961 when he met a group of Filipinos visiting Manila for a chapel of Opus Dei close to the university in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

"I thought I should do my part," narrates Dr. Estanislao, 66, noted economist and former finance secretary in the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo administration. An Opus Dei numerary, Estanislao had served as Opus Dei regional director for Asia.

"Then a priest of the Opus Dei assigned there—Fr. Alfonso Lecuona Cresso—told me that it was not I who would do the work." In other words, it was God who was going to do the work through the worker.

"It was the first time it was said to me that way," recalls Estanislao. That was how he began to understand Opus Dei ("God's work" in Latin) and what this institution within the Catholic Church was all about.

Estanislao wasn't in a spiritual search made at that time. He had studied in Catholic universities—the Divine Word Missionaries' San Carlos University in Cebu for college and the Jesuits' Fordham University in New York for his master's. Priesthood or membership in a religious group was never in his

OPUS/DEI/A11

Critics pan 'Da Vinci' in Cannes

CANNES, FRANCE—"THE DA Vinci Code" drew lukewarm praise, shrugs of indifference, some jeering laughter and a few derisive jabs on Tuesday from arguably the world's toughest movie crowd—critics at the Cannes Film Festival.

The year's most anticipated movie, "The Da Vinci Code," has sparked protests from Christian groups as far away as South Korea, Thailand and India.

Protest actions included boycotts, a hunger strike and attempts to block or shorten screenings.

The movie was a generally faithful adaptation of Dan Brown's best seller, spinning a murder thriller that stems from a cover-up of secrets about Chris-

CRITICS/A15

SC chief: We uphold civil liberties vs gov't action

By Armand N. Nocum

CHIEF JUSTICE ARTEMIO PA-nganiban yesterday said that the Supreme Court was asserting its independence when it struck down as unconstitutional acts of President Macapagal-Arroyo regarded as inimical to civil liberties.

In a speech before graduate students of the Georgetown Law Center in Washington, Panganiban said that the court's recent decisions affirmed its commitment to "safeguard the liberty of our people and to nurture their prosperity while upholding the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary."

Panganiban referred to "landmark" rulings on petitions assailing Executive Order No. 464 barring officials from congressional inquiries, the Calibrated Preemptive Response (CPR) policy against demonstrators and Presidential Proclamation No. 1017 that placed the country under a state of emergency in February.

"In all these cases, the Supreme Court upheld the primacy of civil liberties over governmental actions," Panganiban said.

He stressed that any move to suppress the rights of Filipinos in exchange for economic progress would not succeed. "Filipinos may endure occasional hunger, but they will never tolerate injustice and indignity for long."

He said this was the reason President Ferdinand Marcos' martial law regime failed to produce long-term economic progress.

Panganiban also said that unlike its foreign counterparts, the Philippine court cannot adopt the "view that courts exist to fix a raccoon," given the "stark realities of poverty in our country."

Thus, he said, the Philippine judiciary must work hard at contributing to the country's prosperity. Panganiban said liberty and

SC CHIEF/A4

WEATHER FORECAST

TODAY: Mostly cloudy with isolated thunderstorms and rain showers

Second FRONTPAGE

STOP: Anti-Cha-cha leaders Lac and Drilon

...AND GO: Pro-Cha-cha advocates led by Raul Lambino

Cha-cha foes unfazed by dialogue

By TJ Burgonio

THE NEWLY ORGANIZED STOP Cha-cha coalition says it is not daunted by the agreement of the Senate and House of Representatives to discuss constitutional reform, and it is determined to mount more road shows and file more cases in court to derail any move to amend the Constitution while President Macapagal Arroyo is in power.

Members of the coalition are also confident that the senators would not bend over backwards and agree to sit with the administration-dominated House in a resettlement assembly to amend the 1987 Charter.

By agreeing to the dialogue, the Senate was merely performing its role in the system of checks and balances, former Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman said yesterday.

"I think that the Senate is being wise in its exercise of making democratic interventions work, defying what Malacañang is doing, which is to corrupt all democratic institutions," she said in a public forum in Makati.

"It is Malacañang that is in a panic because their plans are not coming to fruition as promised by their operators," she added.

Soliman, together with nine resigned Cabinet colleagues, is a member of the Black & White Movement which is part of the STOP Cha-Tanong (Stop to Reason) Cha-cha coalition that includes people like former President Corazon Aquino, former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Senate President Franklin Drilon and other political luminaries and youth leaders.

Senators and congressmen agreed to the dialogue in last Tuesday's meeting of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Committee called by Mr. Arroyo to defuse the political tensions.

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles said yesterday that the Lower House would not insist on the two chambers voting as one in a constituent assembly if they agreed beforehand on what constitutional amendments to adopt.

"If they agree to amend the Constitution, why not?" Nograles said in an interview. "What is important is the finished product. We could do it whether voting separately or jointly as long as it's a done deal."

No sense or no cents emails on agreement on which provisions would be revised, it will now be **easier to determine if we move forward with the** Cha-cha through Constituent Assembly, which is **favored by most congressmen, or through a Con**stitutional Convention, which is preferred by the Senate," Nograles added.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President was "gladdened" by the development.

"As the Senate and the House leaderships prepare for talks, we are hopeful that they will find a middle ground to move forward Charter change," Bunye said in a statement.

As yesterday's STOP Cha-cha forum, Drilon allayed fears that the Senate had softened up on its stand that both chambers must vote separately.

"Contrary to the spin, nothing happened yesterday except an agreement that our choice on constitutional amendments will sit down today and talk. Nothing else has changed," Drilon said.

The talk-talk about the Constitution being amended by July 2007 is all part of propaganda. It's quite obvious that it will not happen," he added.

Former Sen. Vicente "Tito" Sotto said he believed it was necessary for the Senate to go to the dialogue "so that they will not be seen as intransigent." But he reiterated the Senate opposition to convert to a unicameral system. He said it would be suspect and lose credibility.

Soliman said the anti-Cha-cha coalition would press ahead with its community-based forums in the countryside to explain the truth behind the administration's attempt to amend the Constitution and to mobilize people's opposition to the people's initiative.

The group is holding a program, dubbed "Tango"—for "Tanggalin Mayo si Gloria Itago mang Cha-cha"... in front of the Commission on Elections at around 3 p.m. today.

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, head of the coalition's legal task force, said the group was preparing to file more cases before courts in Caloocan, Makati, Pasig and Quezon cities, and Manila to stop the Comelec from swiftly signing on the administration-orchestrated people's initiative. With reports from Philip C. Tubeza and Christine O. Avendaño

Senators propose amendments to rules on inquiries

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

SENGKUNAN

A DAY AFTER HOLDING AT bottled a meeting in Malacañang, some of them yesterday sought to amend the Senate rules governing inquiries in aid of legislation supposedly to encourage witnesses to appear in hearings.

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan, chair of the Senate rules committee, said the revisions of the rules on Senate inquiries would hopefully "lead to better cooperation between the Senate and the executive department," Pangilinan said.

The proposed amendments would unilaterally please **Malacañang, which has bemoaned** the hearings as "in aid of destabilization" and sought to detail them by issuing Executive Order 464.

Pangilinan and Senators Ralph Recto, Manuel "Mar" Roxas II and Pia Cayetano filed Senate Resolution 402 despite an earlier Supreme Court ruling declaring as unconstitutional parts of EO 464 that prohibit them from inviting government officials to those appearing in congressional hearings without the President's consent. Malacañang has said it would seek a reconsideration of the SC ruling.

In their resolution, the four senators proposed the additions of six provisions, which are intended to "rights of a person appearing in or affected" by the Senate inquiries.

Advance copy

The new provisions include requiring a potential witness to submit his or her written statement from their in advance, the hiring of a lawyer who shall help the committee screen the testimony, the holding of executive sessions for confidential matters, and giving a person to be mentioned by a witness the opportunity to testify to answer allegations against him or her.

"My fellow senators and I are proposing amendments ... in hopes of assuring witnesses that their rights will be respected and to ensure that they can choose to appear before Senate investigations in aid of legislation," Pangilinan said.

He said the new provisions were meant to address the concerns of persons appearing in the Senate, including government officials, that their rights will be respected as mandated by the Constitution.

"These proposed amendments would also ensure that the cooperation of witnesses would not lead to their rights being prejudiced. We hope this too may lead to better cooperation between the Senate and the executive department," Pangilinan said.

New rules

The new rules are:

- Every investigation shall specify the laws, orders, rules that will be reviewed.
- The rights of a witness appearing in or affected by an inquiry shall be respected.
- Every witness intending or invited to appear before an investigation shall submit a written statement of his/her testimony at least three days before the scheduled appearance unless the majority of the members of the committee determines the urgency of one's testimony in which case the witness will be excused from this requirement.

This requirement for an advance copy of a testimony has been ruled by pro-administration senators during the controversial Senate "hearing" investigation where members of the President's family were implicated.

- Holding of an executive session where matters concern national security in consonance procedures; where testimony will tend to charge an individual with crime or misconduct, to disgrace or injure professional standing of an individual, or expose him or her to public contempt and violate his or her right to privacy. Witness testimony will disclose the identity of an informer or law-enforcer.
- The committee shall hire a lawyer to "assist the committee in evaluating the testimony of the witness and in drafting guiding between admissible and inadmissible testimony."
- Giving a right to the impugned person in file a sworn statement or personally appear personally or submit a sworn statement that would be used by the cross-examination of the witnesses.

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Gonzalez fires back at Cuenco

By Armando N. Macaro

JUSTICE SECRETARY Raul Gonzalez yesterday dared Cebu Rep. Antonio Cuenco to produce the "proof" in part of their legal team even as he denied accusation that the Department of Justice is dictated by a Marcosian thinking.

"You may have the Marcosian thinking in your head because you cooperated with Marcos from Day 1 of Martial Law. We can compare our records during Martial Law and see who was dancing to the Hawaiian music, which I never did," said Gonzalez, a former fight lawyer during the Marcos years, in a letter to Cuenco.

Gonzalez was reacting to statement from Cuenco for the President not to blame the Department of Justice for the complacency. The Gonzalez who figure in legal entanglement like the pursuit of five party-list congressmen accused of **rebellion.** Cuenco said such moves only **work against** efforts to unite them in government.

Gonzalez said he could not understand why Cuenco is angry over the need for the DOJ to go after those out to bring the government down.

No permanent chief of NBI yet; Mantaring is acting director

By Christine O. Avendaño

FIVE MONTHS AFTER THE RESIGNATION of Reynaldo Wycoco, Malacañang has yet to come up with his permanent replacement as head of the National Bureau of Investigation.

This after Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita announced yesterday that Jesus Mantaring will be designated as its acting director.

President Macapagal-Arroyo appointed Mantaring last April 19 and his appointment paper was released last April 28.

Wycoco surrendered to a stroke in December last year.

In his weekly news conference, Ermita also announced the appointment of five other officials to various positions. They were appointed to those positions by the President from May 3 to 4.

These were former Philippine National Police chief Roberto Lastimoso who was appointed as Director V of the Metro Gulf Transit Line 3; Josefina Santos as acting member of the Board of Directors and Patrolc Dakudao Pozas as member of the Board of Directors of the Manila Electric Company. Antonio Habana as member and chair of the Board of Directors of The Human Technology Hub Inc. and Stefano Jones, member of the board of directors of the Human Technology Hub Inc.

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Pinoy on top of the world

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first of Filipinos in the mountaineering world. I think that is a very strong way we showed them what we are made of. All around the world, people will look at Filipinos with higher esteem."

Strategy

A second SPARE climber, Erwin "Pastor" Emata, also 32, was expected to launch his own climb in the predawn last night in the company of four climbers from Andorra in Spain and their Nepalese guides, Wales said.

He was expected to reach the summit today.

Pabilo said the team split up Oracion and Emata as part of its "strategy"—"Just in case the weather turns bad, there is a climber on standby."

From the camp's account, Oracion started off from Camp 4, the final step station at the snowbed area at 26,000 feet, on Sunday night, and had been climbing since.

He had to fight off exhaustion, the thin air and the cold (temperatures dropping to as low as -60 degrees Celsius) to reach the peak.

Oracion brought with him an oxygen tank, water and some personal effects, including a rosary on drawing of the Philippine flag by his 8-year-old daughter.

Dream come true

In an interview aired over NBN-CIIN, a principal sponsor of Oracion's climb, an emotional Valdes said a Filipino on top of Everest was for him "a dream come true."

"We showed the whole world that if we [put] our act together we can accomplish anything. Indeed, the Filipino can do it," Valdes said.

Pabilo was full of praise for his teammate who, he said, climbed from Camps 3 to 4 without the aid of oxygen tanks.

"Leo is methodical with the things he does. He is a good person and he takes very good care of his teammates. He knows what he is doing, and his lifestyle is exceptional," Pabilo said.

Oracion was expected to reach Camp 3 last night, and to make the trek down for around eight hours today to reach Base Camp.

Next year, the whole SPARE is scheduled to climb Everest (29,028 feet, or 8,848 meters) through the North and South routes.

Some will be chosen as climbers; the rest will serve as support teams.

Team members Pabilo, Enrico Severino, Larry Gonzalez, Jason Salvosa and Noelle Fernandez were at the Sarawood Apartelle in Cavendish, Makati City, for a press conference when they heard the news of Oracion's feat.

Pilots: Pabilo heard confirmation from Wales, the team manager who is based in Bureau of Jay. Shortly afterward, they gathered in say a quick prayer for the safety of Oracion on his descent and of Emata on his own summit.

"We have overcome every obstacle to our struggle. We thank everybody who supported us with their prayers," Hernandez told reporters at the venue.

Gardure

Oracion and Emata arrived at the Everest Base Camp on April 15. By then, rival climber Romi Garduce had been preparing for his own attempt to become the first Filipino to plant the national flag at the summit.

Garduce, 37, who had arrived at the Base Camp late in March, is due to reach the summit tomorrow, according to his principal sponsor, URAI-7. WBB ace MVP expert

THUMBS UP AND HIGH HOPES mark the launch of the First Philippine Mt. Everest Expedition in March 2004.

Feast of crispy pata, lechon awaits Everest conquerors

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"They must have missed Filipino food so much during their stay at Mt. Everest...so we'll make sure that their hunger will be full once they get back," said Carina Reynoldo, who, along with Jenel Belarmino and Noelle Fernandez, spoke with the Inquirer while tweaking news from the mountain yesterday.

Reynoldo, Belarmino and Fernandez, the only women in the 17-member PSMEE, were beaming with pride at the prospect that two of their fellow climbers were soon to reach the peak of Everest. Oracion made it on the predawn trip with Emata not too far behind.

In mountain climbing, a team's success is measured when at least one member gets the job done, Belarmino explained.

Next year, the three women are scheduled to follow Oracion and Emata's lead. They are to leave tomorrow for an expedition in Alaska as part of their preparations.

Fundraiser

Fernandez said the experience and triumph of their two colleagues would be invaluable in their effort to achieve a similar feat.

"They are two of the strongest members of our team, and we took up to them for inspiration and encouragement," she said.

And the feminist, too, the women said.

ORACION: Right backbone

EMATA: Expected to reach summit today

"There is not kept us alive during our treks," Reynoldo said, recalling an instance when Emata showed up wearing a traffic aide's vest and knee-high socks.

But when it came to climbing mountains, Oracion and Emata were all business, and acted as big brothers to other members of the team.

Reynoldo said the two mountaineers often stayed at the end of the line, encouraging climbers and climbers to go on and even carrying part of their load, and making sure that no one would be left behind.

Not impossible

Reynoldo said the physical and mental strength of Oracion and Emata had long convinced their teammates that reaching the top of Everest would not be an impossible task for the two men.

"The capability is there. It's only by the smallest chit will spell the difference," Fernandez said.

The women got to know Oracion and Emata when they began training with the PSMEE in 2004.

In March, the five of them joined the Philippine Coast Guard in Subic Bay for a mountain and search-and-rescue seminar.

"They will be a great asset to the organization," Lt. Commander Joseph Coyiuy, PCG spokesperson, told the Inquirer.

Their compatriots? The opportunity to reassure people is a...bonus, and monthly pay ranging from P1,000 to P4,000.

Oracion's triumph thrills Palace, Lucban residents

For page A1

swimming, cycling and basketball, Perez said. He was in high school when he started climbing mountains.

"He would climb Mt. Banahaw once and over by himself," Perez said. "He would also jump backwards from Atis Bridge, but with a harness."

Family members were surprised at the huge undertaking that Leo's climb had become. But they said they had no doubt that he had the capability to make it.

Said Loren Oracion of her older brother: "Of course, all of us are very happy. We're so proud of him. We hope that he has realized his dream. Even as a child, he wanted to climb mountains. He is always after adventure."

Lucena said the family was planning a reunion, perhaps even a small party, for her brother.

Also reportedly being planned were a special welcome by the Sangguniang Bayan and a motorcade for Lucban's native son.

Palace rejoicing

Early yesterday, with Oracion's feat yet to be confirmed, Malacañang could not contain its excitement and sent congratulations to him and Erwin "Pastor" Emata.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita told reporters that the expected success of the two climbers showed "the indomitable spirit of ... men, especially if they're Filipinos."

"We're equal to anyone in the world," Ermita said, adding that the Palace was "rejoicing that the Filipino flag is on top of Mt. Everest," Ermita said. "We are proudest [sharers]."

Social secretary Mikaela Angeles would call out the red carpet for the climbers, Ermita said he was sure Oracion's triumph would "inspire [young] that they're accomplishing this feat."

"You can imagine how the world will be looking at Filipinos being able to plant the Philippine flag on top of Mt. Everest," Ermita said. "We are proudest [sharers]."

Social secretary Mikaela Angeles would call out the red carpet for the climbers, Ermita said he was sure Oracion's triumph would "inspire [young] that they're accomplishing this feat."

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Nervous

In Davao City, Pastor Emata's wife Mary Ann said she and the rest of the family were feeling nervous as he approached the summit of one of the world's most dangerous mountains.

Mary Ann said that while she and the family knew Pastor to be a seasoned mountain climber, they could not avoid worrying about his safety and that of the other members of the First Philippine Mt. Everest Expedition.

"He ask you to pray for their safety. Let us pray that their climb would be successful," she told the Inquirer yesterday.

Mary Ann said the last spoke with her husband on Saturday. "He told me he was raining me and the children."

The Ematas have two children and live in Tagum City some 60 kilometers north of Davao.

Mary then quoted her husband as saying that he and the other climbers were fine.

"They will rest a little upon arriving at Camp 4...and start climbing again [Wednesday] evening," she said.

'Mama's boy'

By his wife's account, Pastor (nicknamed thus because of his religious fervor) has been climbing mountains since he was 15—a passion that intensified in 1993 when his mother passed away.

"He was deeply hurt by his mother's death. His passion overbecame more intense because of that, so he climbed Mt. Apo and stayed there for two weeks," Mary Ann said.

She described him as a "Mama's boy."

Pastor completed a tourism and travel management course at the Mindanao International Technical School in Davao City.

He is employed as a tourist guide and usually accompanies tourists here. He is also a member of the Davao-based Sandawa Hiking mountaineering club.

Pete Bermejo, a close friend and fellow climber in Davao, said Pastor had asked him during their most recent conversation to prepare a roast pig for his homecoming celebration.

He said he was not expecting Pastor to make good on the promise to become one of the first Filipinos to reach the summit of Everest.

"I told him to just plant our flag once he gets there," Bermejo said.

Under contract

In Bataan, the family of pro amateur mountaineer Noriel Endaue is praying for God's protection to keep him safe and help him realize his dream of reaching the summit.

Noriel's sister, Ella, said family members were gathering together to pray. "We're behind him. We pray a lot, after Mama said somewhere," she said in a phone interview from the family home in Barangay Tinalon in Balanga City.

Citing an exclusive contract with GMA 7, family members declined to talk about how they were feeling about Noriel's climb.

Basic, the Philippines' "highest altitude-trained Soldier," left Everest Base Camp on Sunday and was expected to reach Camp 3 yesterday or today.

He is expected to reach Camp 4 after another day of trekking. From there, he will make his final climb to the peak.

With reports from Christine O. Avendaño in Manila; Dennis Jay C. Santos, PIU Mindanao Bureau; Dimsy Dogoy, PIU Central Luzon Desk

Gov't posts rare budget surplus in April

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government's finances.

Some analysts see the surplus as a sign that fiscal reforms—including the implementation of the 12-percent expanded value-added tax (VAT) in February—were taking hold in the Philippines, Asia's largest source of sovereign debt after Japan.

The underpressed

But not everyone was impressed with the latest numbers. "The details were less than stellar...with the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) underperforming by a huge margin for April by around 10 percent," said Sin Beng Ong, economist at JP Morgan's Chase.

Expenditures in April shrank 7 percent to P77.4 billion while spending in the first four months of the year declined 1.8 percent to P258 billion as the government coughed up money for the construction of bridges, schools and roads after years of scrimping.

Government expenditures were expected to rise in May and June as the government planned to accelerate capital investments before the rainy season sets in.

More work needed

"The surplus was aided by lower expenditures. The sister are expect such disbursements to be higher in May and June, we have to work on the revenue side if we want to stay on track of the fiscal target for the full year," Nora said in a press conference.

The BIR, which accounts for two-thirds of three-fourths of government revenues, collected P71.6 billion in April against its target of P76.6 billion.

Even said income tax payments in April of 140.5 billion were 12 percent below target as large companies used their existing tax credits against their tax payments, resulting in lower cash collections. (Related story on Business, Page B1.)

"It's really in the income tax that we had a setback," Even said. "The challenge on the revenue side is to make sure we don't have the same kind of difficulty as we had in April."

In April, VAT collections amounted to only P28.98 billion, slightly lower than the BIR target of P31.4 billion.

The government is banking on extra revenues of about P71 billion a year from the 12-percent VAT.

Even said the Bureau of Customs (BOC), which collect tariffs on imports, collected P 46.3 billion, slightly lower than its P51.51-billion target for the month.

Customs Commissioner Napoleon Mendoza, however, disputed the figures of the Bureau department, saying the bureau actually collected P63.58 billion. Mendoza said the BOC and the DOF would be reconciling the collection figures.

The Bureau of the Treasury which collects dividends from state-owned firms, collected P4.8 billion during the month, slightly higher than its P4.3-billion target.

Target too high

The IMF wants the finance department to lower the bureau's revenue goal of P675 billion this year, up 26 percent from 2003, saying the target may be too high.

The BOC is also pushing a crackdown in collection target this year, saying the government's decision to reduce oil tariffs, which it estimated to result in forgone revenues of as much as P5.2 billion, should result in a corresponding decrease in its collection target.

But Even insisted the goals were "realistic and attainable."

He added the government would not change the combined revenue target of P872 billion—up 25 percent from 2003—for the BIR and Bureau of Customs this year.

The government, which is fighting corruption, evasion and weak implementation of tax laws, wants to cut this year's budget deficit to P125 billion, or 2.1 percent of GDP, from 2003's P146.3 billion, or 2.7 percent of GDP.

In 2005, the government, which spends about a third of its budget on interest payments for about $76 billion in foreign and domestic debt, had budget surpluses in April, June and August.

With a report from Reuters

1,300 soldiers set to evict ex-Navy officers

By Dona Pazolingan

THE PHILIPPINE NAVY HAS FORBIDDEN 1,300 enlisted men to evict over 50 retired Navy and Marine senior officers from their quarters in Fort Bonifacio this Saturday.

In a show of force, 100 junior officers and 1,200 soldiers assembled yesterday at the Marine Headquarters grandstand, a stone's throw away from the disputed Bonifacio Naval Station (BNS) quarters.

"They should be ashamed of themselves. Where is their shame?!" Task Force "Bulik Bulok" commander, Marine Lt. Col. Globante Jimenez told the troops in a "pep talk."

The retired officers showed no sign of leaving their individual quarters inside the BNS estate they have claimed for their own in the past 15 years.

They maintained they have legally acquired the 28-hectare lot through a title issued in 1992 to their group, the Naval Officers Multipurpose Inc. (NOMI).

While the case is pending in court, past Navy leaderships have allowed these retired officers to stay on, much to the frustration of senior officers still in active duty who were entitled to the quarters.

These former Navy chiefs, Vice Admirals Domingo de Jesus, Oscarino Hingpit and Mariano Demaocia even continued to use their quarters long after they have retired.

De Leon retired in 2005, Hingpit in 2003 and Demaocia in 1994.

Last Friday, the Navy served a "final notice of eviction" on 56 of the newly occupying officers. They were given until Saturday to leave their quarters.

De Leon and Hingpit and retired Rear Admiral Antonio Dina have sent word to the Navy leadership they would move out before the deadline.

D-Day for eviction

"Saturday is our D-Day for the eviction. I don't care if they were evicted. We will follow orders," said Hammag, who likewise said next week is his pay day.

No ranking Navy or Marine officials were around at the troop formation, except for Navy spokesman Capt. Geronimo Maldabasan and Marine spokesman Lt. Col. Ariel Caralipio.

Maldabasan said the task force was given a total of 40 M35 trucks, forklifts, and payloaders to do its job. "We will not extend the deadline unless they remove a (court) order," he said.

One of those to be evicted, retired Vice Admiral Pio Custodio Jr. told reporters he would not leave his quarters.

He appealed to President Macapagal-Arroyo to stop the eviction, as he resisted a proclamation issued by her father, the late president Ferdinand Marcos, signed in 1963 that declared areas of the Fort Bonifacio military reservation as housing sites.

The NOMI acquired a land title to the 880 officers' quarters in 1992 on the basis of Macapagal's Proclamation 461. In 1994, the NOMI secured an injunction from the Court of Appeals against their eviction.

"We will not leave on Saturday... We are very afraid and anxious because more than one thousand soldiers are following illegal orders," said Garrido, who spoke to reporters outside his quarters.

Other ranking officials who face eviction are former Marine commandants Lt. Gen. Edgardo Espinosa and Emmanuel Teodoro; Rear Admiral Augusto Reyes, Eriberto Nuesa, Manuel de Leon and Danwero de Guzman and Maj. Gen. Guillermo Ruiz.

The Navy said the overstaying officers have also piled up P7 million in unpaid electricity and water bills. Three with the highest debts are retired Commodore Julio Casillan with P13,2,820, Commodore Rene Leander Dino with P134,582 and Espinosa with P131,819.

DE CASTRO

Noli assures cardinal of gov't assistance for rail squatters

By Cynthia D. Balana

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO yesterday assured Manila archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales of an "in-city resettlement and beneficiary-led development" for the 22,000 squatter families affected by the rehabilitation of the Philippine National Railway tracks on the Southrail project.

De Castro said the concerns raised by Rosales in his letter which was addressed to this Vice President in behalf of the relocated families were not inaccurate.

"It is understands that some quarters have presented to the Archbishop issues that are either recycled, inaccurate or not to their proper contexts," De Castro in a letter-reply to Rosales.

"The welfare of the relocatees has always been a paramount concern to the government. We are extending all forms of assistance to ease their plight," he said.

The over $50-million government project will cover the Philippine National Railways' 56-kilometer railway from Caloocan City to Mabalog, Muntinlupa City. Once completed, it will have the capacity to carry roughly 397,000 passengers a day.

In a letter to De Castro dated May 12, Rosales sought the latter's assurance that the displaced families would be relocated to a site with adequate facilities and would be given alternative "in-city relocation sites."

Rosales said that poor people living along the railroad tracks from Caloocan to Los Baños had come to him several times confiding their relocation problems such as children's education, family income, distant relocation and excessive transfer fee on-off dates and deadlines regarding the relocation.

Rosales also said that based on a study conducted by the Urban Poor Associates, the situation at the relocation site in Cabuyao, Laguna, was "seriously poor"—the water is not potable without boiling, there is still no light and family incomes have declined to P5,000 on average a month from a pre-location level of P8,200 to P7,800," the cardinal's letter said.

Looking for solutions

De Castro said that while he recognized the difficulties of these affected families, the next government housing sector had not ceased looking for solutions.

He said that since the relocation project began, he had been holding dialogues with the families involving multi-level organizations, private sector groups, non-government organizations, peoples' organizations and the beneficiaries themselves, to minimize the dislocation of affected families.

De Castro also said that he was convinced on in-city resettlement and beneficiary-led development is the best approach to take in relocating the settlers along the North and South rails after a thorough review of several options presented.

"I have directed the agencies under me to ensure that this approach is preserved and explained properly to the beneficiaries. They are the ones who will be affected by any actions," the Vice President said.

He pointed out that differences in perception notwithstanding, the government abides never had resorted smoothly with various organizations assisting the relocatees.

These included the Homeless People's Federation assisted by Fr. Benjamin Tajan-do, SJM of the Visayanian Missionaries; the Diocese of Malolos through Fr. Dennie Espejo and Fr. Vince Reyes, the Gawad Kalinga led by Executive Director Antonio Meloto and the UN Habitat.

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9:00 - 9:15 a.m. Welcome & Opening Address
9:15 - 10:15 a.m. Keynote Speech
10:15 - 11:00 a.m. AutoCAD® 2007 - Up Your Value Now!
11:00 - 11:45 a.m. Autodesk Subscription Program
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Manufacturing Solutions Breakouts:
1:30 - 2:30 PM Inventor Professional Overview & Update
2:30 - 3:30 PM Inventor Simulation for Manufacturing Solutions, Part 1
3:30 - 4:30 PM Break
4:30 - 5:30 PM Inventor Simulation for Manufacturing Solutions, Part 2

Infrastructure Solutions Breakouts:
1:30 - 2:30 PM Infrastructure Solutions - What's New and Return on Investment
2:30 - 3:30 PM Civil 3D Power of Parametric Engineering
3:30 - 4:30 PM Break
4:30 - 5:30 PM Civil 3D Customer Success: An Overview
5:30 - 6:30 PM Managing Information Assets Effectively across the Entire Project Lifecycle

Building Solutions Breakouts:
1:30 - 2:30 PM Building Information Modeling - Job Made Us
2:30 - 3:30 PM Break
3:30 - 4:30 PM Customer Success Story
4:30 - 5:30 PM Break
5:30 - 6:30 PM Customer Success Story

Media & Entertainment Breakouts:
1:30 - 2:30 PM Character Time: Ideas with Animation that Move
2:30 - 3:30 PM Break
3:30 - 4:30 PM Transforming Information for Powerful Visualization Workflows
4:30 - 5:30 PM Break
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BOLSTED FROM SLEEP: the "evacuees" excitedly file out of their barangay after the warning goes off.

WAITING FOR THE DRILL: as alert outside their homes in Barangay Bulusan, Sta. Domingo, Albay, a woman and child get set to evacuate as soon as the tsunami alarm sounds.

As chapel bells ring, Albay villagers 'evacuate'

From page A1

al, though minor, tsunami affecting only unpopulated islands.

It was the first-ever international tsunami drill that put to second use the disaster-preparedness and response capabilities of tsunami-prone communities.

While they awaited the go-signal from civil defense officials, Bulusan villagers readied their food, light and sleeping necessities.

As they trekked to the designated upper and safer ground, the evacuees brought along firewater bombs, biscuits, jars of rice, pails and bottles of water, umbrellas and lanzones lamps.

A crippled man with backpack joined the morning crowd with limbs, eyes, ears and voice activated and relayed from the national civil defense agencies down to the concerned local disaster-coordinating councils.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center installed in Hawaii sent out information about recent earthquakes to the respective national warning stations.

Bells peal

In Bulusan—which has a sitting population of around 700 and an estimated transient population of around 2,500 a.m. by the pealing of a bell in the village chapel, located just some 20 meters away from the shoreline.

With a megaphone in one hand, a barangay tanod (village watchman) went around the cluster of huts, urging the residents to get ready for an evacuation.

When the second bulletin was received at 5:45 a.m., the bells successively rang, signaling immediate mass evacuation.

The villagers lined up along the barangay road and proceeded to an elevated area.

By 6:15 a.m., the barangay was virtually deserted as some 1,400 villagers were already settled on an elevated open field.

Roadside metal signs were set up by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) pointing the way to safety.

There were also signs at the coastline declaring danger areas and requesting the people to go to a higher elevation in times of earthquakes.

Bryan Rodriguez of the municipal mayor's office described the simulation exercise as giving importance to preparedness for possible hazards and disasters.

The tsunami drill highlighted the proper warning system that culminated with a mock evacuation, which was very orderly.

The quakes that struck Tuesday and Wednesday, the largest measuring magnitude 7.3, served as a vivid reminder of how seismically volatile the Pacific Rim can be. No damage or injuries were reported.

Vivid reminder

Wednesday's exercise was aimed at recalling any repeat of the 2004 disaster in Asia, when killer waves hit a dozen nations and left 216,000 people dead or missing—many of them because they were not forewarned of the danger.

At the start of Wednesday's test, e-mails and faxes were sent and alarms sounded in monitoring stations in the participating nations to signal a mock magnitude 8.8 earthquake off the coast of Luzon.

The exercise followed a similar test on Tuesday, when officials simulated a scenario in which a 8.3-magnitude quake hit Chile, triggering a tsunami that would have affected much of the Pacific Ocean region.

In Malaysia, about 600 villagers living along the coast of Johor state on Borneo Island were evacuated as part of the drill.

Malaysia's Meteorological Service said a received simulated earthquake and tsunami alerts from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii and Japan's Meteorological Agency early Wednesday.

Renato Solidum, head of the Phivolcs, said he was impressed by the strong turnout for that country's exercise. About two-thirds of Bulusan's 1,200-plus villagers joined while the rest were to work outside the village.

Julio Torralba, a UN Development Program official who observed the drill, rated the earthquake response and chain coordination among local officials.

"The message is that you need two communities well-coordinated national institutions and prepared communities. The combination will help to save lives," he told The Associated Press.

Real earthquakes

In Japan, Yuji Hirkinuo, an official at Japan's Meteorological Agency said the exercise went as planned.

Several earthquakes hit the Pacific region during the two days of the drill, including tremblors off New Zealand, Indonesia and the Pacific island nation of Tonga.

The latest, a magnitude 5.8 earthquake on Wednesday evening, rattled Tonga at the same time that emergency authorities on the country's islands were broadcasting simulated earthquake alerts as part of the Pacific-wide simulation.

Sixty Wednesday, New Zealand's national civil defense controller Mike O'Leary said the 7.0-magnitude quake that hit north of that country's Kermadec Islands on Tuesday had generated a minor local tsunami that did not affect any populated areas.

Chris Ryan, of the National Meteorological and Oceanographic Center, the Australian organization that sends tsunami warnings to emergency officials, said the test went according to plan in Australia, despite the quakes.

"No major problems or unexpected events apart from a couple of earthquakes before the exercise started...civil crisis, that is," he said, referring to the quakes that jolted New Zealand and Indonesia.

Participants

On Tuesday, major participants included Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras, Australia, the United States, Canada and several Pacific islands.

Participants on Wednesday included the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Russia, China and several Pacific islands.

With a report from AP

THE DISABLED are not exempted from participating in the drill that could save day save the entire barangay from a monster tsunami.

Impeach bid ushers in early Christmas

From page A1

Prince's promises, including cash, projects and appointments, during the past two months alone, has been compiled with," said the opposition congressman from Iloilo.

After laughing the impeachment attempt against Ms Arroyo last year, Minority Leader Francis Escudero warned Monday the opposition would resume its bid to unseat the 10-year-old Pres[i]dent when the Third Congress opens in July.

No visit from Santa

Escudero also threatened to expel from the minority the *three who would sign* support the impeachment initiative. Last year, Ms Arroyo's majority allies soundly squelched the opposition's effort to oust her even after getting the vote the 2004 presidential election.

The Constitution allows only one impeachment case to be filed against the President in one year.

Suplico yesterday told reporters some administration lawmakers were unhappy that Malacañang had not lived up to promises they would be rewarded for signing the impeachment move in the final last year.

"Santa Claus did not visit us, as the Palace promised," Suplico quoted one disgruntled Arroyo ally.

Assistant Majority Leader Mercedes Pantoroilla of Bacolod City fanned at Suplico's swipe. "Santa Claus is coming back to town."

"The Palace does not distinguish us and we in the majority have our own sense of [illegible] in dealing on any impeachment complaint," said Pantoroilla. "The majority are already in a panic mode because of their imminent defeat."

Kill move earliest

Rep. Eduardo Bautista of Bicol[illegible] for distribution reports that Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez had ordered those supporters to kill as the earliest possible opportunity any impeachment case against the President this year.

"The rules on impeachment will be followed to the letter and we will be transparent in all our actions," said Bautista.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita was more candid. "It's not really unusual for a member of Cabinet or Justice Secretary Gonzalez to take such a position."

Ermita said it was also only natural for the administration to say that it did not expect the move to unseat Ms Arroyo to prosper.

Rep. Marcelino Libanan of Eastern Samar said: "The biggest problem that the minority has is how to handle it on the ground. They set their own policy—no 79 signatures, no filing of case. That's their setback."

He referred to the number of signatures needed to move the complaint to the Senate for trial.

Libanan pointed out that despite the efforts of the minority to bring the impeachment complaint to the Senate last year "55 signatures was the best they got even with the momentum of their house-to-house campaign at the time."

No one to blame

"If they fail to get the magic number, they lose. Period. They have no one to blame but themselves. The President does not meddle in the individual decisions of administration lawmakers," said Libanan.

Opposition party-list Rep. Josel Villanueva of the Citizens Battle Against Corruption described the new impeachment case as a "frame-up" to determine the principles and source of conviction of such members of the opposition.

Lilo Obanion Lontoc[illegible], chair of the Charter Change Subcommittee, called on Congress to give priority to moves to amend the Constitution and adopt the parliamentary system instead of impeachment.

"Charter reforms are needed to arrest the growing number of OFs (plus families going hungry, homeless) said."

"The parliamentary form and federal structure will enable us to replace plundering and power-tripping leaders," he added. With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Norman Bordadora

FANCIAN BAN: Independence

SC chief: We uphold civil ...

From page A1

property should be regarded as mutually inclusive.

"Liberty becomes the guarantee that free business[illegible] and suppression, we all can continue of the good life and act according to those conceptions. I venture the proposition that a society marked by such liberty is prosperous," he said.

Bernardino had also given speeches before the United Nations Development Program and the Philippine American Chamber of Commerce in New York. He is set to give lectures in Europe later.

Palace unfazed by German threat to suspend investments in RP

MALACAÑANG is unfazed by the prospect of foregoing investments from Germany because of the long delay in computerizing Ninoy Aquino Int'l., the biggest foreign shareholder of Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco), the building the Ninoy Aquino International Air Terminal 3.

In a briefing, Presidential Secretary Margarito Teves said that while it was unfortunate that Germany would withhold its humanitarian investment in the country pending the resolution of the Ninoy 3 controversies, "the economy will just have to find ways and means to compensate for the foregone investments from somebody else." Germany financed over $1 billion in annual investments into Bavarians.

German Ambassador said Stationed Weinhaupt based his country's plan to foster infrastructure investments in the Philippines in protest over the government's foot-dragging in working on amicable settlement of the NAIA-3 problem to $550 million being demanded by Piatco and Piatco which built the Main 3.

The Supreme Court nullified Piatco and Piatco's Main 3 contract and allowed the government to expropriate the facility subject to just and fair compensation. But Malacañang wants to have a third party assessor to determine the just and fair compensation as it argued that a big chunk of the investments that Piatco and Piatco claimed to have spent on Main 3 were used for bribes.

Teves said that he was not overly concerned about the German ambassador's threat because he was skeptical on how much top Weinhaupt holds on his country's business decisions. "Mr. are we to trust the German ambassador can influence all German investors," Teves said.

For Teves, the key to keeping investments flowing into country was improving the economic and political factors. "If we strengthen our fundamentals the businessmen are looking into, we'll be able to convince more investors from other countries," Teves said.

WE THIRST FOR PEACE
(IN BULACAN)

Peace is our prayer, hope and commitment. Peace is when the government no longer allots an inherent percentage of the national budget to military spending but to education and other services to the people... Peace is when communities are no longer harassed by military troops, taking their chickens and rice harvests. There can be no genuine peace when basic human rights are trampled upon and when the people live in a climate of constant fear and intimidation.

Statistics show an upsurge in the cases of human rights violation in the province of Bulacan since the deployment of the 24th Infantry Battalion to augment the forces of the 56th Infantry Battalion, and the assignment of Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan as the Commanding Officer of the 7th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army in Central Luzon last September 2005.

Since President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo took office in 2001 and up to 2005, documented human rights violations in the province alone numbered at 36, of which 7 are cases of extrajudicial killings and 2 are enforced disappearances, not to mention the cases of physical harassment and mental torture affecting more than 1,300 workers, peasants, fisherfolks, urban poor and youths.

From January to March 2006 alone, 13 civilians were killed, excluding many civilian and barangay officials who are victims of enforced disappearance, physical and mental torture and house burnings perpetrated by armed human wearing men that residents suspect as having links with the military and in some cases, victims identify the perpetrators as elements of the 56th IB and 24th IB of the Philippine Army.

The victims are deprived of their basic rights to live guaranteed in less than by our faith and by existing laws, both national and international. Without any formal charges, they were arbitrarily arrested or forcibly taken and even killed in the allegation that they are NPA sympathizers or supporters. This is contrary to the constitutional principle of presumption of innocence. The perpetrators acted as the accusers, the judges and the executioners.

It is saddening however that the present administration is somewhat indifferent to these alarming cases of human rights violations in the whole country, including Bulacan where victims are civilians, suspected of being CPP-NPA sympathizers and activists identified with the progressive leftist groups. In a democracy like ours, rights of every citizen should be respected, regardless of religion, political beliefs etc.

In this context, we appeal to President Arroyo to immediately conduct a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation of each human rights violations which have so place in a Christian nation such ours. These investigations should lead to the prosecution and punishment of the perpetrators so that authorities may thwart the "climate of impunity" and could send a clear message to all members of the police, military and other security forces that involvement in, or acquiescence to such human rights violations will never be tolerated.

We also appeal to immediately pull out these military troops stationed in the province of Bulacan, for it is evident that the rampant human rights violations occurred during the deployment of additional troops, particularly the 24th IB PA under Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan. How come that in the Tarnayo Farms Massacre in San Ildefonso, where 5 civilians were killed and 2 were forcibly taken by 15 armed human-wearing men, the farm is located just 100 meters away from a military checkpoint and 200 meters away from a military detachment?

As people of faith, we are called to be human rights advocates and peace builders. The peace that we should seek is the peace based on justice –where human dignity is upheld and no one is denied fullness of life.

"Ang Mundi'ldita ay ipinaglaritan ang buhay ng tao sa kanyang mapinagpalang panganganlgan, hindi upang gantihin ito ng walang pakundangan kundi upang alagaan ito ng may katarungan at tapat na pag-ibig," (pastoral letter of Bishop Oliveros)

Condensed from the statement "We Thirst for Peace (in Bulacan)" signed by concerned leaders and citizens of Bulacan. The signatures drive to support this statement is still on going.

Signatories: **Most Rev. Jose F. Oliveros, D.D.** Bishop, Diocese of Malolos; **Rev. Dr. Rolito B. Taguiam** Bishop, United Methodist Church-Manila Episcopal Area; **M. Rev. Reynaldo Alvarez** Bishop, Iglesia Filipina Independiente Diocese of Bulacan Bulacan; **Bishop Rene Baltazar** Bishop, United Church of Christ in the Philippines; **Rev. Fr. Rodolfo Diamzon, Executive Director, CBC R.D.** Bishop, Iglesia Catolica Apostolica Filipina Obispado de Bocaue; **Diocese of Malolos:** Most Reverend Jose Oliveros, Most Reverend Pedro Arigo, Most Reverend Jesus Cabrera, Most Reverend Jesus Cabrera, Most Reverend Jesus Cabrera

SC ousts justice from Imelda case

By Armand N. Nocum

THE SUPREME COURT THIS MORNING dismissed Sandiganbayan Associate Justice Gregory S. Ong on nine counts of graft and corruption charges after Ong was reprimanded in June and thus he would threaten the case because it was unwarranted and that he found chief witness former Solicitor General Frank Chavez "manipulating (newspaper)."

In the decision penned by Associate Justice Adolfo Azcuna, the high court directed Ong to excuse himself from the case, saying the chair of the antigraft court's fourth division should be mindful "of the principle that judges should avoid impropriety in their conduct" at all times.

"In insulating the bench from unwarranted criticism, thus preserving a democratic way of life, it is essential that judges be above suspicion. It bears stressing that the duty of judges is not only to administer justice but also to conduct themselves in a manner that would avoid any suspicion of irregularity," the tribunal said.

The court ruled on the petition filed the Office of the Ombudsman asking that Ong be prevented from hearing the case after Ong told Special Prosecutor Winnifred E. Sulit that he did not want to take the case.

"I do not want that case. I will dismiss that case. When I listened to it in the case you were prosecuting, Chavez was saying nothing but hearsay," Sulit quoted Ong as telling him in his visit in February 2005.

Bantay Kalikasan fined for La Mesa Ecopark

By Blanche S. Rivera and Philip C. Tubeza

THE TABLES APPEAR TO HAVE been turned on Bantay Kalikasan as the government yesterday declared the environmental group had broken the law by opposing the La Mesa Ecopark without an environmental compliance certificate.

The Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) also fined Bantay Kalikasan P50,000 for violating PD 1586 establishing the environmental impact system and an additional P5,000 for each year of its existence.

But even before the LLDA could serve Bantay Kalikasan the penalty notice—scheduled to be released not today—the environmental group claimed that the La Mesa Ecopark did not need an environmental clearance certificate because the water and plants grounds were not critical to Metro Manila's water supply.

"It's 70 to 80 meters below the dam reservoir so it's not environmentally critical. And what we did here is to rehabilitate an already existing park," said John Paul Soliven, Bantay Kalikasan operations manager.

Soliven agreed the park needed a "certificate of noncoverage" and said it would apply for it.

LA MESA Dam Ecopark

The LLDA's call against Bantay Kalikasan is ironic, coming on the height of a campaign by the group to stop a housing project for employees of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) on grounds it would contaminate the reservoir on top of not having an environmental clearance.

Rep. Teodoro Locsin, a supporter of the housing project who tried to fight off Kalikasan's moves, charged that the environmental group itself had no clearance to operate the park.

"Based on the investigation report of our town-removal Impact Assessment Unit, your La Mesa Ecopark (JS Incentive artifex dba La Mesa Watershed) has violated the ... laws ... for undertaking a development activity without first securing an environmental compliance certificate and LLDA clearance," Casimiro Ynares III, LLDA general manager, said in his notice to the environmental group.

The LLDA also issued a similar notice to the MWSS for its concessive housing project.

The LLDA asked Bantay Kalikasan to apply for an ECC and LLDA clearance within 30 days. The 60MSS, which was fined P5,000 per year of violation, was also required to secure an LLDA clearance.

Former Department of Environment and Natural Resources chief Elisea Gozun, who ABS-CBN Foundation chair Gina Lopez claims had told the group chair an ECC was "not required," denied encouraging the La Mesa Ecopark from obtaining the necessary environmental permits. Bantay Kalikasan is part of the ABS-CBN Foundation.

"I really do not recall having said that ... You know that all development projects require an ECC. I would never have said anything contrary to our own regulations," Gozun told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

"What I would have done had I known there had been an application (for an ECC) was to facilitate the issuance," Gozun said.

Bantay Kalikasan heads the "Save La Mesa Coalition" opposed to the housing project for 1,411 employees of the MWSS for how domestic wastes would contaminate the reservoir, the main source of drinking water for Metro Manila's 12 million residents.

KING JAMES
AUCTION CALENDAR
AUCTION TODAY
UNISOL INDUSTRIES AND MANUFACTURING CORP.
(To be sold as per building basis)
AUCTION DATE: MAY 18, 2006 (THU) @ 10:30 AM
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Tax raps vs Juday upheld; arraignment set today

By Cynthia D. Balana

JUDY ANN SANTOS

MOVIE ACTRESS JUDY ANN Santos, popularly known as "Juday" will be arraigned today by the Court of Tax Appeals after the Department of Justice upheld the findings of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) that she had incurred income tax deficiency of P2.714 million in 2002 "to the prejudice of the government."

The arraignment was set by the CTA, after Santos' "Motion to Reconsider the Denial of her Motion to Quash the Information" was rejected by the latter for lack of merit...the BIR said.

In her motion for reconsideration, Santos claimed that she was grossly denied right to due process; that the information failed to allege the elements constituting the offense charged; and that the prosecuting attorney has no authority to file the case.

The DOJ said it found no merit in a reinvestigation of the case after a preliminary investigation found a reasonable ground to believe that tax evasion had been committed by the actress when she failed to declare her combined income from the ABS-CBN television network, Viva Productions and Star Cinema.

According to the DOJ resolution dated Oct. 1, 2005, Santos had "willfully, unlawfully and feloniously" filed a false and fraudulent tax return for 2002 by indicating therein a gross income of P6.252 million when her correct income was P8,536,000 million, or a difference of P2.282 million.

The CTA assumed jurisdiction of the case since the amount involved was more than P1 million in tax deficiency. A bail of P20,000 was recommended for Santos' temporary liberty.

Aside from a string of movies to her credit, Santos has done several product endorsements for KH Bamihan, Leonardo Regis, Angel Evaporated Milk, Yakult, Piltel, MSA Computer Learning Center, Pacific Blue Shades, and San Miguel Beer, among others.

She was also the lead star of Krystala, a 30-minute fantasy series aired by ABS-CBN during the first quarter of 2005.

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Jail officials told to identify youth offenders

By Norman Bordadora

INTERIOR SECRETARY RONALDO PUNO has asked the country's jail officials to coordinate with the Public Attorney's Office to identify the juveniles still detained to relieve their burnout of being rehabilitated in youth homes.

Under Republic Act 9344 or the Juvenile Justice System Act, which was signed into law by the President last April 28, children in conflict with the law shall undergo diversion programs like counseling, capacity building, training and service-oriented work under the DSWD's supervision instead of being detained in jail.

Puno said many juvenile inmates or children in conflict with the law in the provincial prisons have yet to be transferred to the rehabilitation centers run by the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

"I have directed officials of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology to help speed up the release of juvenile offenders who have remained in prison because of pending court orders," Puno said.

"The BJMP should coordinate with DSWD to find out what legal obstacles need to be handled to facilitate the quick release of these juveniles still languishing in adult jails," he added.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, May 18, 2006
5th Week of Easter
John 15

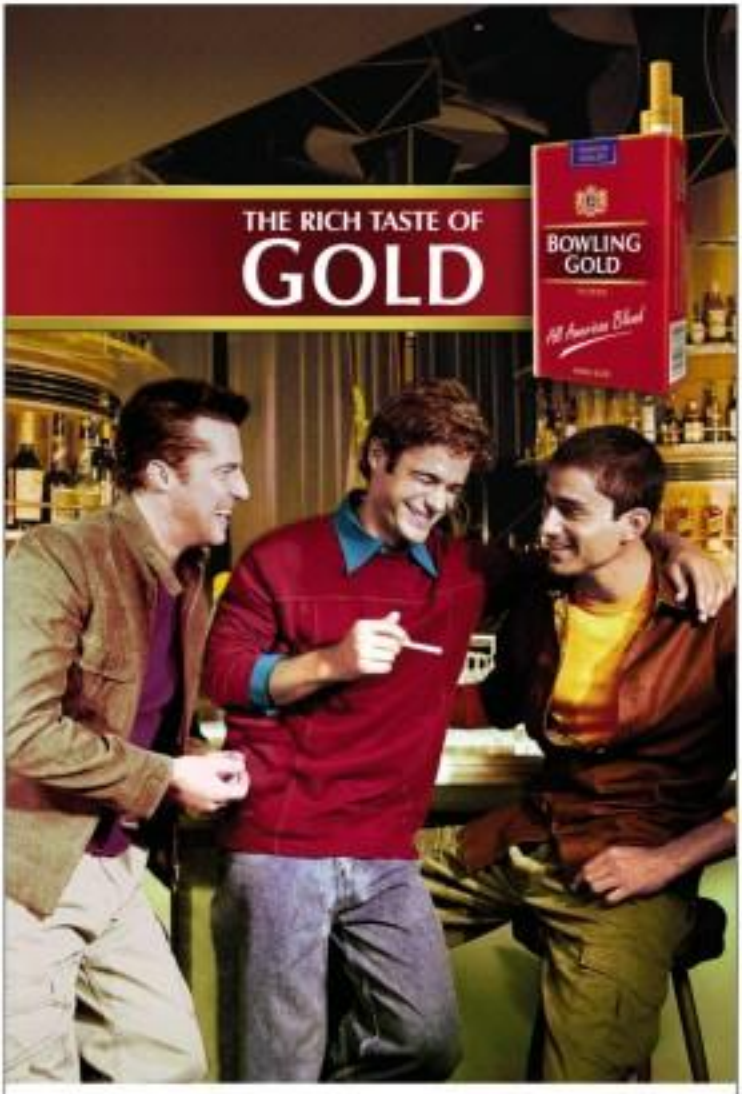
1st Reading: Acts 15:7-21
Gospel: John 15:9-11

Jesus said to his disciples, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; remain in my love. You will remain in my love if you keep my commandments, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.

"I have told you all this, that my own joy may be in you and your joy may be complete."

Commentary

Jesus' words and utterances that the Spirit makes us distinctive, purifying the Gentiles' hearts by means of faith, teach the same to their own hearts. They should not have an added burden laid on them; a yoke that is unnecessary. Paul and Barnabas speak, and their words the elder of the Jerusalem Church. He counsels and tells that the Gentiles refrain from what is impure. It is decided. And Jesus is clear that there is only one commandment. And all the others center serve to highlight it: love one another as I have loved you; and you will know the joy of God.



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Madame Miriam

EDITORIAL

MANY JOURNEY INTO THE DESERT TO GAIN self-control or grow in wisdom. Jesus famously spent 40 days in the desert to be tested by the devil. Unfortunately for our democratic experiment, Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago joined President Macapagal-Arroyo on her state visit to Saudi Arabia and emerged from the desert as, well, a fortune-teller a la Madame Auring.

We do not know whether this is a sign that she was shown the kingdoms of the world and liked what she saw, or whether she is simply learning to cure the sting of political reality into the bread of political opportunity. Perhaps she is still working out her response to the second of Jesus' three temptations to the desert. Jump from the temple top, and wait for the angels to catch you. Maybe she could not wait, and decided to feather the ground, so to speak, to cushion her fall.

"I don't want to forfeit by default my duty to help write the new Constitution," Santiago said last week, rather unexpectedly, by way of explaining her readiness to run together with the House majority to convene a constituent assembly. This came as a surprise, because until last week we did not realize the thought she was elected in 2004 to write a new Constitution in 2006.

But this much we know: When she returned to the country over the weekend, the Ferry rumor suddenly developed the demise of the Senate—not next year, not by 2010, but in two months' time, by July. Or would have been even more stunning if she had decided to put more distance between the living and the dead, and resigned, but we suppose there are limits even to fortune-telling.)

Naturally, her pronouncement got the attention of the media, which is of course part of the point. Unlike the country's many fortune-tellers, however, the lawyer-senator had a lawyerly caveat: "Between May 15 when the present session resumes, and July 24 when a new regular session begins, the Supreme Court will have enough time to hear and decide a test case on the House resolution to convene as a constituent assembly," she said. If—a big if, it turns out, even in her own estimation—the high court rules that the two chambers of Congress can in fact vote jointly when they are convened as a constituent assembly, then the Senate will be history by July. If not, then, well, she was merely belaboring the obvious.

Surely even Santiago, who famously used to eat chalk dorsals for breakfast, can see that the basis for her prediction is so thin, without sustenance. But this has not stopped her from issuing more statements.

This week, she made a rather unusually public attempt at number-crunching. The abolition of the Senate and the adoption of a unicameral parliamentary system...she said, would save the country some P5 billion in the next five years.

Her arithmetic is suspect, not only because it (again) is conditioned but also because her approach to math is all too political.

It doesn't bother her if the Senate were abolished, she said, because after all her colleagues were one elected bit and square. "If Senate elections do not truly reflect the people's will, let us abolish the Senate and move up its next political evolution," she said.

Apparently, the crystal ball at the top-out of the desert not only allows her to read the future, it allows her to decline the past.

She made an astonishing claim: Survey poll-makers somehow ended up topping the Senate race. "This can only be explained either by money or by magic. So how can certain senators adopt a moral stance with respect to President Macapagal-Arroyo's election?" she asked. Because she ended up in the (far far) unfamiliar place of second's (in other words, right in the soul-misguided middle), we suppose that she has no quarrel with the results.

We wonder what she would have thought of the abolition of the Senate if she had topped the last elections. Perhaps she wouldn't have gone to the deserts of Arabia in the first place.

But the issue is Santiago as fortune-teller. Aside from the shock value she provided, there really isn't much to recommend her to her new role. We suggest she keep her day job.

Whipping boy and tutorials

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

THERE'VE BEEN REACTIONS FROM ABROAD to issues that rock this country. Here are some of the more polished comments.

From Sheikh Awadi, in Jerusalem, Israel, like Teresa Kong writes: "Your [recent column 'Bargaining/begging' carried by INQ7] was a step from the circle covering the outside, mislabeled as 'Charter change.' But it overlooks one point. Our politicians make a basically sound Constitution into a whipping boy to escape loathing.

"The President is the loathed compromiser dining on the Charter all problems, from lack of infrastructure to bureaucratic gridlock. The rest refers to their avarice and corruption. Congress, for example, hasn't passed a law to ban dynasties, much less one to authorize a 'people's initiative.' And I'm not even talking about fertilizer scams, pork barrel, etc.

"If people's initiative or constituent assembly will not work in charge, it means more of the same oppression by the same oppressors. The Constitution has not failed us. We have failed the Constitution, starting with the President."

Dr. Rhando Abella fed the United Nations office for migration until his recent retirement. From Vancouver in Canada, he writes:

"Sir Teresa San Tarver, a Filipina professional working with WHO, called my attention to your column, 'Crawfish anyone?' on overseas foreign workers' remittances. I'm glad there appreciation is being raised, suggesting to government that we need more than just to rely on these inflows.

"While many observers (especially outside giant) lament conspicuous consumption by relatives receiving households, the fact is that people are using the money for basic needs. And when times are hard—motivated by altruism, unlike speculative capital which is very nervous.

"World Bank studies show that migrant households do not have a consumption. Whether any difference from non-migrant households with the same income. Like you said, they'll invest their hard-earned money in something sure: children's education, better housing, better food, etc.

I REMEMBER THAT IT WAS POPOY LAGMAN and not Sir-at Oreneo who did not particularly want Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as second Veep during Fidel V. Ramos's position was "Hobgo All," a slogan in turn been shouted in Mendiola and painted on walls, a call for both Veep and Gloria to resign to pave the way for new elections. Lagman's argument was that the entire Veep administration, to which GMA belonged and had acquiesced by silence, if not by active cooperation, had betrayed the public trust. It should be abolished in toto. He called for Ricardo Cruz to head a caretaker government and preside over snap elections.

It was Bayan Muna that thought otherwise, agreeing in GMA becoming president for many reasons. Not the least of it was that after pleading it safe for a while, GMA had finally come out and claimed with them. Have been proud of it, and frankly I cannot understand why they do not belabor the point as well inasmuch will the military to oust Erap. She was awfully.

Oreneo's role was over Lagman's to the Left camp, the "Hobgo All" positions being promptly dressed aside. Well, Bayan Muna might have won the battle, but it has lost the war.

"Kataksilan" (treachery) is the word government has used in a documentary purporting to show a Left-Right conspiracy against GMA, which presumably justified—and should justify in future—emergency rule. That is all very well, except for one thing. When Bayan besieged admin

Over the past year, no other group in this country has been persecuted with murderous zeal by government than Bayan Muna. The "Tanda-sa-isa" is by no stretch of the imagination metaphorical. Leo Echanedia, night...gunmen shoot and killed Manuel Intal, Jr. a barangay...in Pampanga, bringing to an eye-popping 63 the number of Bayan Muna members killed since GMA took power, and to 123 the number of leftists killed over the same period. Almost unbelievably, Karen was the fourth leftist in the by a leftist in five days, raising the murders into a near daily thing.

And despite the fact that the Supreme Court

'Kataksilan'

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

but junked SP 1017, releasing the "Batasan 37" from their congressional prison, Raul Gonzalez continues to dangle a legal sword over their heads. As things stand now, they can be jailed literally the hour of their reunion. The line is the real sword dangling over their heads, as drawn by the unending body count of Bayan Muna members.

You can't have a graver case of treachery than that. But the treachery goes beyond Bayan Muna to encompass everybody.

The reason for singling out Bayan Muna for persecution is easy to see. It is the "weakest link" in terms of public acceptance among those opposing GMA. It can be portrayed with near-impunity, the public being stunned (not to mention cowed) by the killings, as a finger to stop it in the brain? (conspiracy seemingly). One wonders what happens only to "them" and not to "us." That was what the Nazis did in the 1930s: use one scapegoat to the Jews and Bolsheviks whom they lumped together as one. The Jews were persecutorially "liquidated," a hotly idea gone but which the Nazis used completely successfully, not especially ferociously, at the time. It's a classic template for tyranny.

The case against the Batasan 5 alone is a monumental case of selective retribution. At the very least, what makes it so is that GMA is dealing out justice to have a right to rail against Left-Right conspiracies. She was one.

At the very most, what makes it so is that the government has no lack of people to arrest and jail in the attempted "withdrawal of support" but Arroyo. There's many prime-their evidence against them. The "withdrawal of support" was never a secret. It openly and loudly advertised itself, appealing to the public for support from the government cannot go after its leader because it stands to prove only that their "coup" would have been the most popular coup in the world, having the blessings of most Filipinos. There are not enough jails in this country to hold those who armed GMA once and are actively plotting to oust her.

But it's the killings that are truly terrifying. This isn't just random murder, this is orchestrated slaughter. More than journalists, it's the leftists that are being butchered like chickens, in quite a phrase used by one of them. And lest there is any doubt, nobody is playing a game to protect it, or a finger to stop it, if there is anything more terrifying than those killings, it is the silence of the curtain in the face of it.

Bodyguards, they themselves are partly to blame for their lack of sympathy from the public. The murder of your own comrades and gleefully toast it before the public, that public isn't going to read its humanitarian to become, or to the world, when your comrade are murdered. But this is a case that goes beyond liking the victims or taking sides. This is a case where the existence the entire world.

What we're seeing today is not just the murder of leftists, it is the murder of human rights, the very thing we fought bitterly to retake from Marcos. As we saw then, the right to assemble, to freely express ourselves, indeed to continue to exist on this earth, is not a luxury, like tea, it is a necessity, like breath. What we're seeing today is not just the murder of activists, it is the murder of democracy, its chilling message being addressed not just to the activists but to anyone who would oppose a creeping dictatorship.

This is the hate that seems you. "What we're seeing today is not just the murder of Bayan Muna members, it is the murder of all that is decent and good in this country. Look at Nazi Germany and see what happens to a people who agree to the killing of other people to the thought that it has nothing to do with them.

Well, it has. We have the hell of it in the pot, too. Ask not who lies in the red-draped coffin, you do.

Cultural interaction from around the globe

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cassayo

TEETERING DIABETICS FROM THE CENTER for Training and Research at Los Poblenanos Hospital in Bubbles, which is located in Manila City, Filipino Style, Lionel's science center, to make a three-day cultural immersion visit to the South this coming. The training discussions will include a workshop on classical indigenous Filipino drinking and eating habits, including the local healthy and one-drink lifestyle, the newspapers will treat them to a cultural fair that includes limited-waistline dances by students of the Central Luzon States University located in the city of Science Nueva Ecija, the province of Aloe, and the Bamban Palay Dance Troupe of Mayor Rosario Mendez. The visitors may even do some rice planting for the city.

• • •

Barkles Fares is a small, French-speaking country of 18 million in West Africa. But in the news two days its drama people will be treated to Shakespeare, courtesy of the Alliance Francaise and Australia, no traditional Filipino hospitality and an array of native talents.

They are part of the 150 representatives head by Alain Timbaro, director of the Ouaga Intl Theatre Festival, who arrive in Manila this week participating in the World Festival Cinema Schools. The festival is a major event of the 32nd Cannes International Theatre Festival (TIE) which is in Cannes, while the participants in the World Festival are ITI's 50 years. The Philippines was the first in Asia this biennial world cultural Olympics in the late nineteen-in Bangkok, Siberia, nine years ago.

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The festival honored from the successful IIth Kaiten here. Instead of being confined to Metro Manila, the cultural events are being distributed around the country to give more people a chance to experience the best cities and the games in each other. The idea of a "Theatre for All" along the theme of cultural diversity and art as a tool for social development was conceptualized by Artistic Director Dr. Estrella Dimaranan, ITI Philippines president Cecile Guidote Alvarez and festival director Nick Lizares. The 15 participating SF cities were chosen by the festival committee for their interest in art-science and cultural traditions in close regions. Likens said an average of seven schools are planning to participate. It's time to see what a great cultural blossom will be for our family and business.

• • •

Bonnethia Bosco has Van Cleef Dragon's scent his perfume plans to develop a distinctively Asian musical School for Overseas Acts of Luna, Paris, to Vigan for cultural interaction, with the University of Southern Philippines in the lead. He received there the names won't need Spanish interpreters since Vigan has preserved a popular one chant of Hispanic cultural, another city with a rich Hispanic past, Pamboanga, is hosting the theater faculty of Veracruzana University in Mexico, and discussions the natives will get to greet one their Ambassador, a pidgin Spanish that's bound to shock and awe the visitors.

• • •

August 30th the museum with the Municipal Theater Academy of China, Students of Bird Culture are will show off the legends of Manila in dance and drama, but observers are expected also from Colombia and Bolivia. Caguioa and Ateneo de Manila University will receive Bulmaro's National University of Drama and Film, named after U.S. Congress, a famous actor. Participants from Bulmaro will arrive in the city and Bulacan, and Minister Dolmar San Diego Ministry has prepared a three-day show.

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Iligan City known for the Municipal Theater Academy of China, Students of Bird Culture are will show off the legends of Manila in dance and drama, but observers are expected also from Colombia and Bolivia. Caguioa and Ateneo de Manila University will receive Bulmaro's National University of Drama and Film, named after U.S. Congress, a famous actor. Participants from Bulmaro will arrive in the city and Bulacan, and Minister Dolmar San Diego Ministry has prepared a three-day show.

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Philippine tourism should get a big boost from this event. Last night, all 11 regions were simultaneously linked up with their respective visitors' counterparts by webcam, as they announced the cultural festivities they have lined up towards foreign delegations will be flowing in representatives and all of them films will be completed at the Tourism headquarters in Paris this month-while discussions for the subsequent events-never of EF memories will include a visit to a famous World Heritage Site in their regions. For instance, the South Africa drama group will be in Bohol and Dancing in Kansas to see the world famous Baguio Rice Terraces, while the Chinese group may will visit Ilog Sa Chocolate Hills. The Singapore group will ride the Underground River in Palawan while the Chinese will get to enjoy the world's most famous mountain.

One of the highlights of the congress will be the interaction in linked today between the heavenly waters of the Cotton Chair and three's in Bamban Hotel, Tarlac, where the city was formed by Mexico's Mexed Program, which takes care of Mexican children "in especially difficult circumstances." Its members are anybody's guess, but some reports held in ITI municipalities. From Lobos, the two drama will be brought to Manila to sing at the dinner as to be conducted by President Has signed Arroyo at the Malacañang Palace. Also on the agenda of the Leaders' Forum, Indby Ureon executive director Benidero Manaoang, on May 23.

Permanent disability

MY MOTHER IS SOFT-SPOKEN, BUT SHE STANDS SIX pinned on issues that most people shy away from. Just recently, our teenager cousins asked her to sign up for the campaign lamented by the supporters of President Macapagal-Arroyo. Realizing that it was the signature campaign, which the Arroyo administration unsatisfactorily calls the people's initiative, my mother declined, saying she was against it.

This morning, while we were enjoying the cool morning breeze, my sister's house help, her little, mentally-challenged son, my cousins had asked her to sign a piece of paper. My cousin, a teenager official, told her it was the initiative of the people campaign unofficially. My mother signed a petition paper and another cousin chose.

My mother, who is the barangay treasurer, told her the petition paper was indeed the initiative of the barangay assembly, but the other one was for the opposition's campaign. When told that it called for Charter change and the possible extension of GMA's term, my mother asked a question: "Is it not know that I wasn't told it was for that purpose. We will be going backward, if she does not step down."

That's people's initiative for you. Whenever the drama administration officials say the only ones they manage to convince are themselves. But that is not surprising. For two months, the opposition has been claiming that there is increasing hatred that she is the legitimate President.

I guess it is not difficult for her to convince herself that she is indeed the President. After all, the candidate I voted for is dead and the duly elected president is also dead. She has installed her Comelec and Defense to defend her, and there are such brilliant, logical and sensible people!

When I wrote in my blog when I thought about the current political situation, my doctor wrote back to ask why I was so angry with GMA. She was surprised because I had taken part in Edsa II.

I replied that I was not fighting for GMA then, but I was there, like many others, to protest against President Joseph Estrada's conduct. I never questioned GMA's constitutional right to succeed as the presidency. I had no respect when the Constitution mandated, even though I never liked her. Now, while I am questioning her legitimacy, and her behavior and that of Jose Pidal and Jose Pidal Jr.

And she has the temerity to push for the revision of the Constitution!

She started by creating a commission, which was not even supposed to amend the Constitution, since the duty we were supposed to amend the assembly sponsored by the commission, I received a call from a classmate who told me that she would vote for Arroyo. She had to represent a sector of the community or be ashamed as the conversation came in the capitol where the assembly was being held. Well, that's consideration for you.

Sara here senate/Speaker Jose de Venecia assures legality

by July this year, we would already have a parliamentary government. No surprise there. Even before I was qualified to vote, I already knew that the Speaker had dominion over the House of Representatives. The senators are more knowledgeable about the Constitution, while most congressmen seem to be uninformed or misinformed (a) presidential succession, which is already almost the provisions of the Constitution.

The second reason is that the Supreme Court, the safeguard of the Constitution, is still there. And I pray that it will ever trust to perform its noble task of defending the Constitution. I think that the majority of justices are still good and some of its members have been appointed by GMA. And the decisions have strengthened by their decisions on Executive Order 464 and Presidential Proclamation 1017.

But my fears reason for believing District change will not happen because it is clear that people are very well aware of the previous political atrocities. The surveys show that a big percentage of Filipinos do not only want GMA to resign but also want the Constitution to stay as it is. In fact, a classmate told me that his boss, an elected government official and a known GMA supporter, is against the revision of the Constitution. Of course, I cannot verify that, but if it's true, kudos to him.

Even some Filipinos living abroad who say that GMA's the best person to lead the country, I would believe it only if they had first tried living here for a few months. The Filipinos in the diaspora are not aware of the political and socio-economic situation here that Filipinos are more concerned about when they have on their table. Such distracting sentiments could not only keep officials who do not value the people's opinion.

Only administration officials say that the people still want GMA to lead the country, that she was put there by God, that she is the best person to lead the country and that the only solution to all the problems of the country is the revision of the Constitution. But those statements are little more than the desperate babbling of persons who are prone to self-deception. Only the most naive statements to believe in the negative of her presidency.

Does that constitute permanent disability? And that is not legitimate ground for removing her from office.

Jay Ray F. Alberto, 22, graduated from the Ateneo de Manila University in 2003 and is now taking up law in the the University of Santo Tomas in Sliga City.

YOUNG BLOOD

Jay Ray F. Alberto

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? The welcome contributions from the twenty-something and below.—Ed.

Cultion: The nuns' story (1)

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Gwen P. Dayo

THE MONTH AND YEAR CULION ISLAND IN Palawan marks its 100th anniversary as a place where lepers of yore were stripped and confined to the least of their lives. Today, this island is super colony in the world, in a super colony no more. It is now a bustling island municipality. The new generation no longer bears the stigma of the dreaded disease that medical science has finally defeated. The name on the walls does not bear the place and its people have long begun the journey toward healing.

I write one of those who helped write the history of the colony. Sister Mary Consolata Rivera (Sister Consy) 100-year journey toward healing. The experience was rewarding indeed, from her reception from "the main" thing" one of the pieces that I write.

• • •

The two nun-sister when the four French Sisters of Saint Paul of Chartres (SPC) boarded the ship that would take them from Manila to their new mission in Culion. Sister Consy, 19 years on their first sea and hath in their hearts, they bravely sailed forth, "to consecrate ourselves for the care of the poor lepers."

Founded in Louvaille in Clermont in France in 1696, SPC is the inspiration and guide the of Sister," the sisters went to become "partners," to look after the last, the least. The first Sisters of Saint Paul of Chartres arrived in the Philippines in 1907. Two years later, a group of them would embark on a mission among the outcasts.

The SPC nuns were responding to the call of the Apostolic Delegate, Monsignor Ambrose Agius, 1908. They would be the first Catholic nuns to go to the island. Before the sisters, there would be no one only nurses working there.

Sister Salome Barnes, the superior, Sister Marie de Bon Pasteur (sister Sister Lucian Clerk were sent there. Thereon the nuns applied for their to more island in 2 o'clock in the afternoon of May 22, 1906. Several hours later, the sea rolled tough and stormed that was until the ship doubled to disturbances. But the journey was not without its lights and hilarious moments. For the nuns, the mostly French and a little English and had no knowledge of the local languages.

Culion problems were lack of personnel, medicines, facilities and supplies and the most overcrowding of lone lives. Human beings always as its bane. The sisters experienced a strong typhoon in 1918 with a windrush in 1936.

But something greater countered the sisters. The hatred neglect of the Culionons by their families and life as virtual exiled brought extreme sentiments. The marriage ban at that time and the lone separation of the sexes posed a problem. There were even rife difficulties with the sexes.

The nuns battled the Children of Mary and worked for suitable housing for the women. And, after some separation gave rise to reinforcement among the patients. The nurses had to learn the situation with the marriage ban and the sexes issue.

Marriages gave birth to new problems. What to do with the offspring of leprous parents who were cured but could not be discharged? And what the Culion authorities entrusted to the children declared them to be disease-free? Questions abounded.

In 1916, the authorities decided to build a nursery in Culion for children born to leprous parents. The SPC nuns would then be entirely in charge of the nursery. Sister Consy was then 19 years old. She arrogated the babies with only three days showing for their mothers to see," recalled sister.

Even the nuns had to exercise strict hygiene. Those who had contact with the patients had to stay in a disinfecting solution and change clothes before entering the nursery.

The parents could raise their children through glass panels in the nursery. There was no physical contact. Sister Consy recalled how she would hold a small gift for a child, hang it on a stick that would breach the divide. It was heartbreaking. More so when toddlers, not used to seeing people outside, suddenly saw them for the first time. Inconsolable tears of their parents. Many would come to fear and say "Sakaotsisa" (Pyrexia).

(To be continued)

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The tar baby

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

WHAT WAS ORCHESTRATED ALONG THE lines of Leni Riefenstahl's propaganda masterpiece "Triumph of the Will" (the film of the 1934 Nuremberg rally of the Nazis) has turned into a scene straight out of Walt Disney's "Song of the South," in particular, the tales of Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox. The latter tries to beat up Brer Rabbit by him with every kick and punch, he gets more and more stuck until he is five times, six and counting, the rabbit. The lesson, of course, is that you should not be overwhelming you have no chance, sans wits in the first place.

Charter change, as originally scripted, was supposed to result in the intimidating yet unskeptic appearance of a population rising up to embrace democracy. It was going to be breathtaking and unstoppable. It was like putting a Japanese bullet train on Philippine National Railways tracks. Push a button, and everyone will be whisked to their destinies by the world, bring out the bonus bands, publish all the glossy chronicles you desire, and still, the results in robust we have—and need unless don't a people. The Philippines is a country with. And it simply doesn't... and isn't... popular enough. The figuring hopes bolder wars was all about throwing and bravado of a population fed

Working abroad should be one of the many available options

THIS IS IN SUPPORT OF DJEMIL...it's position and recommendation regarding the plight of our overseas Filipino workers...("A policy that's gift," PDI, 5/12/05).

Indeed, it is the duty of the government to provide protection for its migrant workers and to negotiate pro-migrant agreements with OFW-host countries like Saudi Arabia. The challenge now is to prevent the oppression and maltreatment of our workers, like Sarah.

As the Arroyo administration pushes Filipino workers to go abroad so that they can feed their families and bring stability to our economy, it should pursue as well a parallel mechanism to protect them.

Unfortunately, after more than three decades of state-promoted migration, the Philippine government's performance in forging pro-migrant bilateral labor agreements with labor-receiving countries remains poor, until now, it has been marching sovereign. Worse, its negotiating power is limited to lowering the minimum standards of protection and benefits of migrant workers in order to make the hiring of Filipino workers more attractive to labor-receiving countries.

This is not to mention the culpability of the government to fully address the many problems besetting our OFWs, such as rape, maltreatment, contract violations, rampant illegal recruitment, trafficking and the recent acts of migration.

The erosion of several basic deeds jailed OFWs in Saudi Arabia must be a cause for celebration, but at the same time it should prompt our legislators and law enforcers to rethink our policies on migration and to work for an economy that can provide gainful and sustainable local jobs to our millions of unemployed Filipino workers.

Working abroad should be just one of the options; it should not be the only option for our unemployed and underemployed people.

—MARIA HELEN C. DAPIL
program coordinator
Resource and Advocacy Program
Kanlungan Centre Foundation Inc. (Centre for Migrant Workers)
77 E. 10th Street,
Ramiss, Quezon City

Appearances do not make or unmake a crime

TO PARAPHRASE C.S. LEWIS, nowadays, crime is not committed in dark, murky alleys by suspicious-looking paupers but in well-lighted offices by neat-looking men in crisp shirts with clean fingernails. This is what makes cut all the more alluring—and harder to detect.

In real life, an obvious distinction of what good and bad really look like doesn't exist. This is the lesson we get, looking at the alien-thrown and—let's say five-good-looking soldiers in the Subic rape case.

Rape, however, does not discern appearances—the victim's or the rapist's. The victim will not always look like an alluring princess caught in a high tower, and the devil will not always have dark hair, vampire eyes and horns to match. Rape is not a crime of lust or passion. It is first and foremost a crime of aggression and violence, to no one—whether beautiful, docile or not. Rape is about crime.

But because a rapist has a "nice appearance," is "gentle and soft-spoken," celebrates birthdays, and "is from a family...in the newsday," Ps. Reyes persists the "other side" of the accused" (PDI, 4/20/05) shows...does not mean he is incapable of animosity or heinous crimes.

But as one lawyer of the case said: "The public should know that wars change they look like these pogroms, they raped and abused a Filipina, treated her like a pig and threw her on the road. This is what they did. Let's not be foolish by halves."

We should remember that it's the victory who is on the losing end. In fact, in rape cases, we should believe the woman precisely because it takes a lot of guts for her to even come out to a skeptical world and proclaim what has been done to her.

As the year-old abuse-rape-prison scandal in Iraq has proven, the line between victim and victimizer is very thin. The thrill one gets out of it is the kick of establishing power.

—LUIS DARIUS
darius.luis@amail.com

Marriage of convenience between dynasties and oligarchs

THIS IS A REACTION TO Manuel L. Quezon III's column "What's in it for you." (PDI, 5-4-05) Are we hanging on the wrong side of the music here? The Philippine political system is nothing but a marriage of convenience between the political dynasties and the Filipino oligarchs. Being smart.

The late MLQ III was here, the Filipinos were standing in long queues to buy gas and rice, and I did a street inside thrill from his pulling untold grass for re-

cruiting the carbon. I was sad late that night watching for my Pinoy pal. Some three, I learned soon are our great advocates or changes in our political system that I can admire. Here there been nice changes to all in our political system make from the removal of the "drohanchi-cod" and their replacement with "incompetents"!

We're in a quagmire. (1) Below the upper crust of the Philippine society and the Filipino masses sat the middle-of-road of high earners "liking" these soldiers should not direct public focus against what these men really did, or are accused of doing. What happens in this country, is in all particular local societies. Someone, I think, if it is the women who is made to prove her "innocence" and "purity." It is as if she is the one tried and at fault. Her character, her habits, her work are scrutinized. "She is a prostitute, she wanted it, why did she even drink with them?" Her accusers, on the other hand, are presented as victims and much harder. Now, that is the imbalance. Now, that is using media for propaganda.

These American soldiers are using Ft. Julius Bonet's reputation so that we can turn a blind eye to what they have been accused of doing. Our first responsibility is to give justice to the Filipina woman who also has a human face, a loving family, a brother and a sister.

—CLEOMARIO
dancemariano@gmail.com

LETTERS

Spoon wars

I AM A GHANAIAN WORKING in the Philippines. I have been here for a while now and I still have a while to go. I have been reading the BOMRA issue day since my arrival and have been keeping abreast on this so-called "issue" of "The Spoon Wars."

The statements of the Bureau of Immigration (BOI) in every way "out of line." I cannot imagine the BOI's statement that the Philippine school can't close or the Commission on Immigration's system, lists of escort are not permitted in Canada in any form or from one. This probably would not have happened if the teacher had known that the word escort is a culturally distinct Filipino practice.

Mind Canadians are unlike what we find in social media, you were to what the May 14 Talk of the Town column suggested, need to be in actual eating habits go, I must say that we Canadians eat in a variety of ways—with forks and knives, even some with our own hands when it comes to certain types of food.

I have found during my stay in the Philippines that the eating habits of the Filipino people are in more polite than the average Canadian. So although I deeply disagree with the fact that BOI's proud, I think that the issue has been blown out of proportion in the media, by the president of Philippine Canadian cultural relations.

We all need to understand a few issues here so that we may not be so angry the issues Philippine-Canadian citizens that our two countries have established. We all are human beings. Each one of us is important. But we all make mistakes. And when we do, the best thing we can do is apologize.

We should treat this isolated incident and use it as an opportunity to highlight the positive differences between our two cultures.

The Inquirer's Talk of the Town should have focused on the more pressing concerns of the Filipinos. There are a lot more important things in our talk about us to page than a spoon.

—DENNIS DARKEE,
darkeedennis@yahoo.com

Injustice at National Dairy Authority

PHL TEK DISENFRANCHISED RANCHOS at Dairy Authority (NDA) MASSIVE employees, displaces the unjust dismissal of Administrator Valentin M. Bulalacao—"DOP" to all of us at the NDA—from office. It should be emphasized that she was fired for ignoring bidding procedures twice, and for stealing public money.

The first transaction had to do with a consultancy engagement in September 2004. It was necessary to make four milk processing plants more efficient. The plants had been to the hands of dairy cooperatives for around 12 years without any united being paid to government. Since there were no Filipino dairy engineers or technicians in the area we at that time, she and her cohorts in the NDA settled offer one that having a Thai consultant who was in the country would save money for the government. The staff of NDA Operations, and R. Arroyo-Del Mundo, Director of the Administration. The Commission no doubt subsequently cleared the transaction.

Barely a month in the organization show, DMB lost to raise the contracts and go for results such the Thai consultant, who was paid only the dairy enterprises and on the NDA as a government-owned and controlled corporation. Today, all these plants are swayed with heavy penalties contracts, the NDA is collecting was and the enterprises are operating if the plants at a profit.

The second transaction had to do with a contract with McCann-Erickson. As a result of the six programs—facilitated by us less than the million of the National Dairy Development in 2005, then Gen. Arroyo R. Mendoza—the local dairy industry had to lose out of professionally crafted promotion materials (including a TV commercial with Olga Salvador) were approved personally by the Original Philippine Milk Inspection has been adopted as the quality control of local milk producers).

Today, although the dairy sector is small, it is regarded as one of the achievers in the Department of Agriculture. DMB has been a dedicated, effective and honest restructure. Records show that, with her at the helm of the NDA, the agency consistently grew.

As Marcus Buckingham says, the only things that finishes have in common is that they break all the rules. John Maxwell adds, "Great leaders don't just buy into what everybody else is saying, and they don't follow the herd mentality in the case of government processes. Instead, they develop a path. Great leaders are constantly creating their own conditions for success by thinking new roads." This DMB has been.

We truly believe in BOR's integrity in a government servant and its ability to effective leader, and we hope that the powers that be review SMB's case, and do right by her. We likewise suggest that a review be made on existing government processes and rules, some of which in their are not effective in preventing corruption. Further, some rules or processes are no longer relevant and actually slow down a nation aching for faster development.

—GRACE L. CHAN
AND 34 OTHER
NATIONAL DAIRY
AUTHORITY EMPLOYEES

PPI is a solvent company

I WOULD LIKE TO CLARIFY Alcuin Nuyo's report "Delisted pre need firm would sell plots." (PDI, 5/10/05)

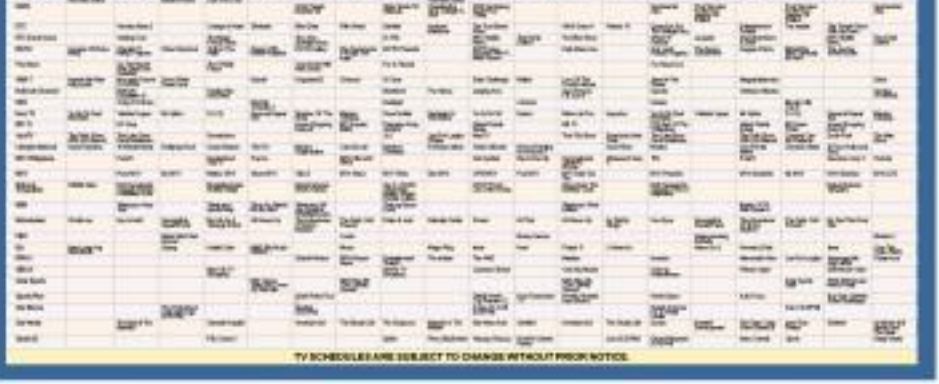
Pacific Plans Inc. (PPI) has stopped selling open-ended subscribed plans way back in 1992 or 10 years before the Securities and Exchange Commission banned pre-need companies from doing so. I think what was not stressed in the report was that PPI would only sell fixed-value subscribed plans, alongside with its other products such as fixed-value memorial and fixed-value pension plans.

The latest funds of these plans, which amounted to P6.38 billion, PPI and its total actuarial reserve liabilities of P6.95 billion. And the fact that the court has ordered an immediate approval of their dividend license and the SEC is poised to do so (PDI, 12/12/05) stems only one thing. PPI is a solvent company and is, therefore, capable of paying shareholders benefits.

I, too, enrolled my three children in PPI educational plans. But these are fixed-value plans. As a shareholder, I believe that the company exists to serve Filipinos here and abroad and, if it is allowed to operate in the future, I am confident that the company can deliver on their future obligations.

Assuring PPI how selling fixed-value plans would compromise the servicing of more than 400,000 fixed-value planholders, we oppose the 32,000 open-ended planholders.

—PETER M. TAGARA
Pearl 2, Ilaw Hpuri,
Tibungco, Davao City,
davchap_mindo@yahoo.com



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PILOT

G-2

Mayor in murder tries to leave RP

By Nikko Dizon

A TOWN MAYOR WAS STOPPED FROM LEAVING THE country yesterday after his name was placed on the Bureau of Immigration watch list in connection with the murder of a publisher in Aurora province last year.

Dingalan Mayor Jaime Ylarde was bound for Hong Kong but the Philippine Air 300 for Hong Kong that was set to leave at 6 a.m. from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Commercial Terminal yesterday.

But immigration officers told Ylarde he cannot leave because he was on the BI watch list.

Ylarde was not detained because there was no warrant for his arrest, according to Ferdinand Sampol, head supervisor of the BI Hala.

Sampol said Ylarde did not protest his initiation to the watch list and simply left the airport.

The mayor also did not mention the purpose of his departure, Sampol added.

Only last week, state prosecutors found probable cause to charge Ylarde with the murder of Philip Agustin, the editor and publisher of the weekly Sunrise Times Newsweek.

The resolution was received by Agustin's family as they marked his first death anniversary last May 13.

Agustin, 54, was gunned down inside his daughter's home after he delivered copies of his weekly in Dingalan, Aurora.

Agustin had been critical of Ylarde, a former policeman, in his columns.

The weekly also carried stories alleging that Ylarde had profited from the calamity funds received by the town in the wake of a landslide that killed hundreds in 2004.

Agustin was the fourth Filipino journalist killed since the start of 2005.

Relatives of Agustin have appealed for justice on the first anniversary of his murder that has remained unsolved like the cases of 38 other Filipino journalists killed in the last five years.

Marites Dimaliwat, sister of the slain frontline Times Newsweek publisher Philip Agustin, said the family was expecting a "fair resolution" from the resumption of prosecution assigned by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez in March.

"We have waited long and all that we expect is a fair resolution," Marites said.

She said they wanted Dingalan Mayor Jaime Ylarde included in the charge as the "mastermind" in Agustin's slay.

A previous resolution, which came on the eighth month of the preliminary investigation, excluded Ylarde from among the suspects but recommended his further investigation by the police and the Aurora Provincial Prosecutor.

Relatives of Agustin, as well as his friend, Dingalan Councilor Maximo Lapuz, had requested the Jan. 16, 2006 resolution and sought the relief of Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco. With a report from Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

1,000 Luisita workers want to own lots through CARP

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—At least 1,100 farm workers at the Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac have signed a petition seeking individual ownership of lots at the Cojuangco family-owned estate.

The farmers' group Kilusang Pambansa ng Agrarista Reform Movement-Hacienda Luisita (Farm Luisita), submitted the 75-page petition to the Department of Agrarian Reform in Quezon City on Tuesday, according to Ronnel Lalic, Farm Luisita spokesperson.

The government has placed 6,874 hectares of the sugar estate under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

Farm Luisita went ahead with the petition even as the Hacienda Management Corporation (HMC) of Filipino-Chinese tycoon Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. and United Luisita Workers Union—which led the agrarian strike at the hacienda from September 2004 to November 2005—entered a collective mode of ownership over the property to ensure long-term possession by labor.

The petition also went on despite earlier policy announcement by Agrarian Reform Undersecretary Narciso Nieto Jr. that the estate, which is zoned by the titles, would be collectively owned by the beneficiaries through a Certificate of Land Ownership Awards.

Lalic said the signatories are legitimate farm workers living in Farm Luisita and in the municipalities of Tarlac, Capas and Concepcion, Tarlac, side of the estate. He said the farmers meet the qualifications set by Section 22 of Republic Act 6657 or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988.

The Hacienda Luisita Inc. does not want changes in the form of land ownership, insisting that they retain the stock distribution option (SDO) scheme. The SDO sanctioned before the Supreme Court the cancellation of the EO by the DAR and the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council.

In their letter to Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman, the farm workers said they "voluntarily signed" the petition.

It was endorsed by Lalic, Farm Luisita Chair Noel Mallari and chapter presidents Manuel Balmas in Barangay Hacienda, Roger Asuncion in Barangay Pando and Victor Carriaso in Barangay Mabilog.

Pangandaman could not be reached for comment on the land only through the distribution of lands to farmers," the officers said in a letter. Fe-nette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

WORK NOW, STUDY LATER

The lack of funds of many public schools in the country is forcing students, like those at the Bata Carmen Dexia National High School in Tarli, Davao City, to volunteer for cleaning chores in their schools in preparation for the opening of classes next month.

Church sticks to same line on population

BACOLOD, PAMPANGA—FOCUS ON SOLVing poverty, not on reducing population.

This Fernando Archbishop Orlando Antonio, chair of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines' Episcopal Commission on Family and Life, gave that advice as he sought an end to debates by legislators and government planners on the project of decrease in the annual population growth rate.

"They should stop debating about the population. That's unnecessary because it's bound to go down. Our people are already intelligent. They will only bring out into the world the children they can support," Antonio told the bishops on Sunday.

He also urged those in government, especially lawmakers, to "do away" public resources away from population management and instead allot those for livelihood programs and job creation.

"Hindi naman[] pills should not be bought anymore. The funds should be reoriented in the direction of poverty and in the advancement and development of our people," Antonio said.

Recently, he said, a study showed a disproportion ate increase of the concentration of wealth on a few people, families and companies.

Antonio also reiterated to campaign against House Bill 3773 (Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Act of 2006), calling it "not a reproductive health measure but a culture-destroy bill."

"It promote the moralization of the mother. A promise reproductive health bill promotes the health and dignity of women. We should not depend on chemicals in order to reduce our population," he said.

Antonio said that he showed in a practice in government-managed health centers. There, he said, couples are told outright to use contraceptives.

Couples, he said, should be allowed to decide "according to their conscience and principles of their Church."

"What we need is our birth control. What we need is self-restraint and that's the real meaning of freedom. We should be able to decide [on the methods] that would make us more humane, human and more worthy of our dignity as Filipinos and as children of God," he said.

The Catholic Church opposes only of natural family planning methods.

Records said the Bgosia that nurses must not those that actually those that the poor are getting more access to health care, education, jobs and lands, and are earning decent wages. Fenette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

BIR exec who flunked lifestyle check gets promotion

COMMO CITY—A DISMISSING BIR revenue officer here, who recently flunked a lifestyle check, had been promoted.

In his order dated May 10, Revenue Commissioner Jose Mario Buting told Mario Marmot, director of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) district office 35 here, to report to Cagayan de Oro City.

Buting said the reassignment was a promotion for Marmot. Seven other revenue officials were also named to higher positions through the same order.

Marmot was being accused of amassing unexplained wealth during his 37 years in the government service. He allegedly owns several pieces of real estate property. He denied any wrongdoing and maintained he was being framed up.

Marmot said he was vindicated by the promotion brought about by his "good and orderliness performance."

Under the latest BIR order of reassignment, Marmot will formally replace Araceli Francisco on May 24. Francisco was being reassigned to the BIR district office 5 in San Pablo City.

Marmot's vacated post here will be taken over by Montaplin Gascarros, BIR central office executive assistant for policy and planning service.

Other officers promoted were BIR-8 director Carmen Pangcog of San Pablo City, who will act as officer in charge and assistant commissioner at the central office in Manila; excise large taxpayers division executive assistant Elvira Vera as new head of the BIR's policy and planning service; and collection enforcement division chief Dominic Angeles, who was named acting chief of the excise large taxpayers division.

From acting executive assistant at the taxpayers' assistance service, director Aida Sinibaldo will take over as acting assistant commissioner for taxpayers assistance while chief revenue officer Rodolfo Bongcaras of Baguio City will be the acting director for the Cordillera Autonomous Region, which is also based in Baguio City. Charlie Bebasa, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Owwa exec suspended on molestation complaint from OFW

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—AN OWWA-Riyadh Welfare Administration (Owwa) official in Saudi Arabia has been suspended pending investigation of allegations that he molested the same Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) who sought his help in February.

Owwa chief Mualimin Bayas and Ed Sigueiza, Owwa executive board in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, have been ordered to the Philippines to serve his suspension and to face the complaint filed by an OFW from Negros Occidental.

"We will let due process take its course," Bayas told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

Bayas said he filed the administrative case against Sigueiza based on the complaint filed by the OFW at the Philippines Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

"The Negrense did not want to sign the complaint under oath so I had to be the one to file the complaint," he added.

Bayas said he met with the OFW while in Saudi Arabia and acted on her complaint. "We took care of her and placed her in a halfway house."

Sigueiza was immediately recalled and suspended, he added.

The OFW accused Sigueiza, who is in his 30s, of molesting her in February when she sought his help after fleeing from her Arab employer who had been making sexual advances.

"I would like to express my disappointment and disgust over what happened. I was able to thwart the sexual advances of my Arab employer ... but I fell into the hands of a fellow Filipino who just took advantage of me," she said in an affidavit executed at the Philippine Embassy in Riyadh.

In her affidavit, the OFW said she had been working as a domestic helper for Ahmed Ibrahim Zedan in Doha, Dhahran, since 2004.

Early said Dubai tried to molest her a number of times but she was able to thwart his sexual advances. In late Feb. 2, she decided to run away.

She sought the help of a domestic helper and driver of a neighboring Iranian family who contacted Sigueiza for assistance.

Early said she was brought by her companions to a shopping center in Khobar where she was fetched by Sigueiza. They got in a white vehicle driven by a certain Alex.

Upon reaching the Palo Building, Sigueiza allegedly brought her to a room on the second floor and told her to have had a big bed, wall sofas, a side table and a big cabinet.

According to her statement, her description resembled the room occupied by Sigueiza in front 2000 to Dhahran.

It was inside the room where the Owwa officer allegedly made his sexual advances.

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Kayaking around Mindoro in 18 days

By Madonna T. Virola
San Jose, Occidental Mindoro

AT 7:40 PM. ON April 22, three men landed on the shores of Barangay San Roque (in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro), putting their paddles to rest after 18 days of navigating the island's contours.

Eric M. Ramirez, nicknamed "Jesse" Bolaños and Ariel "Tabo" Barcenas began their voyage on April 5 in the same place, bound on their return to answer the dare to circle Mindoro in sea kayaks.

The Mindoro Kayaking 2006 Expedition, as they called themselves, is a binding of three individuals of disparate pursuits.

Ramirez, 34, is a US migrant on vacation in Mindoro. Mr. Bolaños: A licensed nurse in New Jersey, although he finished animal engineering at the PATTS School of Aeronautics in Manila; he left the island for the United States in 1993.

His friend from way back in college in Manila, Bolaños, 38, is a successful furniture maker. He earned his Associate in Electrical Engineering degree at the Feati University.

Barcenas, 33, is a postcare nurse at a health center), a last-minute replacement for an original team member who had backed out.

Preparations

With Ramirez leading the adventure, the group convened one year and a half in progress the equipment they would need.

Solo "parasail" and the collapsible boat; sailing after a two-year training in Milan (throwing he extensively read books and other materials on kayaking. He visited kayak shops in New Jersey and met a couple of a kinds to "perfect the line to map for the Mindoro adventure.

Propelled by double-bladed paddles, modern kayaks zoom their origins to the nature boats used in Alaska to trade in 4,000 years ago, according to outdoor lights.

Circumnavigating the island

The start, changed from near the mouth of shales by the three who were not for no-adventure.

To call the kayak into a "voyaging" term would be an understatement to travel around the island in this type of boat requires some maneuvering skills in seven they had just began to realize.

The group said they prepared for two rough areas, one of them off Calintaan at the northwestern tip, where the waves were normally about one meter high. "There was a point where we couldn't see each other," they said.

The other one was Semirara at the boundary of the two Mindoro provinces south of the island.

Exploration

Ramirez said he didn't know Mindoro well and that exploring the island gave him the feeling he was out to conquer a familiar yet unknown territory.

It's Day 5, he saw a wild duck sanctuary at the Pinag-bayanan River, between Sta. Cruz and Mamburao. Two days later, they marveled at the waterfalls cascading from the mountains to the sea at Brgy. Aplaya. They saw Mangyan children paddling to the open sea.

At Minamoro, Polom, the next day, Bolaños and Barcenas sold pebbles for a living and got acquainted with residents of Bindi, Abra de Ilog, on the following day.

Day 8 was Holy Thursday. The group observed strong winds and hesitated to continue their trip. The people offered them a feast for shelter, steamed rice and lapas as night cripes.

Wrong turn

It was a memorable Good Friday. The kayakers made a wrong turn from Cabariti and Palauan to Occidental Mindoro instead of Puerto Galera as they maneuvered against the wind.

Ramirez saw Batangas paddling fiercely but wearing on the same spot. He called Jesse and Barcenas, who was about five miles away, but saw him drifting away from track.

"I thought Edsel's kayak was rammed, but I realized he was not moving," he said, proud of his teammate whose presence of mind boosted the group's morale.

At this time, their hands were almost destroyed by big waves that pushed them to the shores.

When Ramirez's kayak went upside down, the three decided to take a break at a resort in Apaya, about Bagacalao Ll.

Gift from heaven"

While beach in Puerto Galera "was like a gift from heaven," it stirred their wet and aching muscles. Ramirez said he would have wanted to indulge in snorkeling but missed the chance because of fever.

In Puerto Beach, San Teodoro on Day 12, Easter Sunday, the group was offered small cottages by (P200 by a group of women and several men showed interest. raised with some liquor. The price was eventually lowered to P600.

On Day 16, the journeymen encountered wind gusts that gave them a difficult time kayaking in Bonac, Occidental Mindoro. "The waves came from different directions, unlike those in Calintaan where waves were only coming from one direction," they said.

They decided to take a siesta and resort volleyball engage with the people at Dalahican Beach Resort.

The next day, they were greeted by barangay band village parade in a Hanggan-populated island community called Dangkalan in Buhakanio, the coastline is more tame of Orient of Mindoro.

Peñalba said he could not forget the Hanggan in greeting who waved for his mobile phone number, saying he might be able or go to Manila and could call him up.

Insights

The local residents at various parts of other trip gave the group a glimpse of how they have been eking out a living on the coastal communities. Some were fishermen engaged in dynamite fishing, while others were farmers harvesting the seven months.

One man knows his home in down to fish, only to return several hours later with just a single small catch to offer his wife waiting on the shore.

Decided the day the kids doubled their catch to 50 on the promise of a dollar to be home immediately. Why should we prolong the trip?

KAYAK adventurers (from left) Immanuel Peñalba, Eric Ramirez and Ariel Barcenas arrive in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. MADONNA T. VIROLA

Home sweet home

At their second first last stop, they kept thinking of their experiences and how they all began, thinking would compare to the sight of the shoreline, their final stop, they said.

"When I saw the shoreline with my head [snap, I raised my paddle and cheers toward our families, about 20 of them," Ramirez said.

"We were very excited to go home so we rushed our families to the beach."

Their families did not know the details of the expedition and were told of their arrival only on the final day by Ramirez's mother while they were still in Mamburao, Bolaños said, some 25 miles away.

They also did not even know it was Earth Day.

What they brought along

4 paddles, 3-litre tents, 1 air mattresses, 3 sleeping bags, 3 life jackets, 6 cotton duffel bags, 4 plastic/waterproof bags, 1 global positioning system compass, flag, survival kit (2 first-aid kits, injection kit, stitches and sutra, splint, blanket and food), container (for emergency water), lanterns and mini flashlight, canned food, sliced meat, sardines, Power bars, energy bars packed with crackers (as body's diet with high calorie content), mobile phones, head lamp, battery operated stereo, sunscreen, moisturizer, rope, silverware, soap, clothes, sun block lotion, insect repellant, pots and pans, sponge, camping stove, shower bag (a shower-like contraption), mattress, pair of binoculars, dry bags, rolls of plastic bags, and waterproof tape.

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Makati City, Philippines 1200

Each interested party that submits itself for pre-qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria set forth in the Terms of Reference for Pre-qualification.

Deadline for the submission of eligibility requirements for prequalification shall be on May 23, 2006 at 9:00 a.m., Manila time and is non-extendible.

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Executive Vice President and
Chairman, Bids & Awards Committee

(TOL-May 11 & 18, 2006)

Mining town reinvents itself

By Gerald Gene R. Querubin
Sta. Cruz, Marinduque

THE FORMER COPPER mining town of Sta. Cruz in Marinduque is trying to reinvent itself as a tourism destination.

Blessed by pristine beaches, scenic nature spots, and historical landmarks, the former mining site of Marinduque Copper Mining Corp. (Marcopper) is 150 km south of Manila, which makes it more accessible to travelers than Boracay, Cebu or Palawan.

The first-class municipality (average annual income: P35 million or more over the past three years) is the premier destination of the boat-shaped island province.

As the political capital of Marinduque, Sta. Cruz yields an abundant harvest of "life" or "fruits" (small fish), the kind being bought by "bagsing" (called fish peso) makers from as far as Pangasinan. It celebrated its first seafood festival on May 1-3.

Beaches

The main showcase of Sta. Cruz is the Pilar Main Beach in Barangay Matandang. The white-sand beach with clean, clear waters is regarded as one of the finest in the country.

Tourists will discover three first-class amenities still unconquered by gaudy commercialism. They can sit on knees behind three "tangents" of footprints on the white beaches, such as the pebbled Tanghay and Mahipon.

Leading Beach in Barangay Tagwa is a 10-minute journey ride from the poblacion, while Mahipon Beach in Barangay Hinadan is a 45-minute jeepney ride.

Other beaches are the Kalbegbang and Bapa.

Island villages also boast of scenic beaches. Bato San Antonio Beach, a 15-minute ride (6 centavos) from Boac Island Port, which is more frequented by visitors because of its accessible location.

Mongpong Island is another gem of a find because of its white beaches.

Waterfalls

A refreshing choice for visitors are the Kasa-Kasa Falls in Barangay Bangcuangan, the Bangalan Falls in Barangay Tambunganan, and the Alan Falls in Barangay De Villa.

They, however, need not look far because Sta. Cruz has waterfalls right within the poblacion. From where they are staying, they can walk the 0.19 kilometer to the Bunot Falls, complete with dipping pools for children and adults.

Bunot is less than a kilometer from the Sta. Cruz Parish Church, the oldest church of its town center.

Built in 1792, it houses centuries-old religious sculptures and the well-painted "retablos" at the center and the sides.

Less than five minutes of cityside ride from the church is the centuries-old Bakarin or watch tower in Barangay Lapu-Lapu, which was once used by seafarers to spot and ward off possible attacks by pirates.

Caves

Tourists can visit the Bathala Caves system in Barangay Ipil, a 20-minute ride from the town proper. Inside the caves are wonderful stalactites, stalagmites and other natural rock formations. Thousands of guano-gnawing bats inhabit the place.

In one of the caves, giant clams nestled at the "enchanted" pothole guarding it. The more adventurous, however, can trade in warm deep waters of the Bathala-Ilihan Cave.

For nature lovers, the municipality offers areas for hiking, trekking and bird-lifting.

"Visitors would marvel not only at its beaches, scenic spots and historical landmarks but also at the hot-cool hand and accommodations," said Mayor Percival Mendiola.

Since the borders of Sta. Cruz have not been completely defined yet, visitors can stay overnight through the "home stay program" implemented by the Provincial Tourism Office.

They can stay in homes now the beaches. The more adventurous may bring their camping gear and pitch tents on the beach, however, making bonfires or cooking at the beach is discouraged.

Hotels and lodging houses can be found in the town proper.

GETTING THERE

By road from Manila, take a RO-LRO from Pier 4 in Northern Harbor, Tondo. A ferry leaves hourly for Sta. Cruz. Maximum charges P650 per owner trip.

Or take any bus (JAC line, JAM liner or Bob Rida line) going to Tabas-Tabas Port in Lucena City. From there, take an hour's boat ride to Gasan Port in Balanacan port in Mogpog. From Gasan or Balanacan, take a jeepney bound for Boac, Sta. Cruz.

There are also vans that travel from Mandaluyong to Boac.

By air, Asian Spirit offers regular flights four times a week to Busuanga Island. Travel time is approximately 45 minutes from Manila. Public shuttle services are available to passengers headed for various destinations.

The origin of the Opus Dei: 'God's Marines'

OPUS LIBER—LATIN FOR "THE work of God"—is a relatively small group of roughly 85,000 Catholics, mostly lay men and women, but including 1928 in Madrid, Spain, by St. Josemaría Escrivá.

Opus Dei arose from the fervent in European Catholicism of the early 20th century, sharing by the growing gap between the Church and the secular world. It was one of many new forms of this Catholic revival, designed to "evangelize" secularity, meaning to bring the message of the gospel to the modern society.

Escrivá's vision was to form a corps of lay men and women who would then bring Christian life into the boardrooms, parliaments, lecture halls and newsrooms of the modern world. It would be the laity, not the clerical state, who would "redeem" secularity.

All of this is expressed in Opus Dei's core spiritual ideas, the "sanctification of work." Escrivá encouraged his followers not to compartmentalize their self-given lives, to see their ordinary daily work just as "religious" as activity as going to church on Sunday. Opus Dei numbers 1,858 priests, along with 80,041 laity.

There are three main categories of members—numeraries, who are celibate and live in Opus Dei centers; supernumeraries, who live like numeraries but live on their own; and supernumeraries, who are generally married and live with their families. In theory, there are distinctions in one's mode of life, not in level of commitment.

(For more from "What is Opus Dei?" by John Allen, author of "Opus Dei: An Objective Look Behind the Myths and Reality of the Most Controversial Force in the Catholic Church.")

Opus Dei in RP: It began with 3 Harvard boys

A newspaper of

mind, Harvard, of all places, was where he got started, so to speak.

There, he met Bernardo Villegas and Florido Mapa who were also doing doctorate studies in economics. All three were drawn to Opus Dei and eventually sought membership—Villegas and Escudero in numeraries, and Mapa as a supernumerary. The three brought Opus Dei to the Philippines and soon parts of Asia and were instrumental in its growth in the region.

Numeraries are lay people who are committed to a life of celibacy, live together in an Opus Dei residence and follow a relatively structured regimen were while practicing their chosen professions in the secular world. They study philosophy and theology as would be required by priesthood.

Supernumeraries are generally married and live with their families. (Yes children above.)

(SEE BOOK)

God's Marines

Numerary comes from the Latin word numerus and has a Roman military origin. Opus Dei members sometimes refer to themselves as "God's Marines."

And what structural formalities to "God's"?

"I realized I could remain an economist, that I need not give up being one, while offering everything to God," Escudero recalled. "He have a mission to put God into people's lives while maintaining a personal relationship with God." It is a call, a vocation, he adds.

Opus Dei's Spanish founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá, canonized in 2000, visited Manila in 1974 and met Villegas and spent in Barcelona to meet with him. Escudero later met with Escrivá in Mexico.

"He was very interested in the Philippines," Escudero recalled. "He asked me if I would stay. If I were to go to see I'd like to be buried in the Philippines." It

IT HAPPENED AT HARVARD for Dr. Jesus Estanislao while pursuing a doctoral degree in economics. He discovered the Opus Dei and exchanges a terse, home-country.

(SEE BOOK)

was an encounter he would never forget.

Beginnings in RP

Before starting anything, the Harvard boys first had to get the approval of then Manila Archbishop Rufino Cardinal Santos.

The first Opus Dei center for men in Manila was in the condominium of Dr. Villegas' family in Singalong. It opened in 1964 to students, many of them from De La Salle University.

Education and Villegas, a Ateneo alumnus, also had great thoughts spiritual formation and theological formation, conducted talks and recollections. Among them later were two Spanish priests of Opus Dei, Father Jose Morales and Javier de Pedro, and numerary Jose Rivera, an engineer.

"In April 1965 the apostolate moved to a bigger place, the Maryknoll Study Center in Makati. This would be a venue for education and training for male students and professionals and of course, for recruitment.

Drawing students

Soon, Opus Dei gained a foothold in the University of the Philippines in Quezon City. To serve that part of Metro Manila, Opus Dei built Our Benefactor Central Center in 1986. Two more priests arrived to serve the needs of the growing number of male students and professionals.

The women of Opus Dei who arrived in 1965 also built a student residence on Leon Guinto Street in Malate, attracting both students and professionals.

"I was among those who frequently visited the center," says Rose Tagaan who was taking up statistics at UP in the early 1970s.

"There was always speaking in English and I didn't feel at ease," Tagaan recalls. If that didn't deter her from Opus Dei, the middle-aged scarfing more trials did.

Tagaan's ties to the center became more frequent. She did not become a numerary right away and first had to see to it that her widowed mother and younger siblings were economically okay. Financial stability and a good intellect are among the considerations for numeraries.

Although Tagaan's job in a foreign company meant living for many years in those countries that were not predominantly Catholic, she didn't have to stop being a numerary and found ways to live her religious commitments. Her two long trips she count home by canal and literary director of the Modeling Conference Center in Colombo, Laguna. She lives in the religious residence for female numeraries and is a well-appointed one, two-bathroom, that opens to a lush and wooded area.

Expansion

In August 1967, numeraries Education and Villegas put up the Center for Research and Communication (CRC), a business and economics think tank.

The CRC was to be an institution that would carry the church to the workplaces, or so to speak, and impart Catholic teachings to professionals in business, law, journalism, education and other key sectors. Among the early recruits was another Harvard graduate Jose Romero, economist and business journalist, who later became a numerary.

In 1995, the CRC became the University of Asia and the Pacific (UAP) whose some 2,000 students are currently enrolled. Its tuition is among the most prohibitive. Its campus is in the heart of the Ortigas business center in Pasig. Villegas had served as university president.

Inside its huge chapel with a grand gilded altar decorated with renaissance-style paintings is trademark of Opus Dei chapels, and the regular presence of Opus Dei priests for daily Mass and confessions. UAP is now a Catholic school.

This is what Antonio Tuvalla, dean of UAP's College of Arts and Sciences, wants to point out. UAP is not a member of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines. But doctrinal soundness in the courses and general work in the campus are ensured as members of Opus Dei, Tuvalla added.

Subtle education is one ground, not in the curriculum and what activities for the youth, Tuvalla adds. When the business ethics Jesuit-affiliated Xavier State School in Batangas, Tuvalla was there with young UAP graduates giving some of their time and money.

"Okay, UAP is an Opus Dei flagship," numerary and Opus Dei information officer Gonzalo Ma. Romero concedes when pressed to explain the seeming numerary steering members to get their institutions labeled as Catholic-and Opus Dei.

He adds that to further the Church's cause, to sanctify and evangelize, members, parents especially, put up foundations that run schools and centers, the chaplaincy of which is administered by Opus Dei.

Among those are Woodrose School for girls and Southridge in Sucat for boys in posh Ayala Alabang. Parents have also established schools in Quezon City, Cebu and Iloilo.

Opus Dei institutions that are not, in corporate projects—29 study centers, eight cultural development centers for professionals, three retreat centers for women, one university and five professional training centers for women.

Schools run by Opus Dei centers, too—eight grade schools and four high schools. These economically disadvantaged students are found in schools for men and five farm schools.

Rosalind says that running training centers for the poor and out-of-school youth are the newest way of applying the social teachings of Opus Dei and its "preferential option for the poor."

(To be continued)

Critics pan 'Da Vinci' in Cannes

A newspaper of

family's roots.

While readers nonetheless devoured the novel, another from Cannes critics surged from solid endorsement of its pot-boiler suspense to greater of ridicule over its hero's unbelievability.

"It is more about celebrity than the greatest story ever told: a case of art, and it's not the greatest movie ever screened, is it?" said Ian Buruma, a film columnist for London's Daily Mail. "As a thriller, well," he continued, shrugging.

"Maybe the next day I'll forget about it," said Igor Stokhanovsky of Russia Radio in Belarus. "But today the two hours it was good enough... but a Hollywood movie, it's a two star movie."

Critics got their first look at "The Da Vinci Code" a day before its world premiere in Cannes on Wednesday when it also debuts at theaters in France and some other countries. The film opens worldwide on May 19 except in Spain. It opens in the Philippines today.

Directed by Ron Howard, the movie stars Tom Hanks and Audrey Tautou as strangers locked together on a frantic quest for the Holy Grail after a series of murders in the Louvre.

The filmmakers added some twists and turbulence here and there, but the general theme of the novel remained intact, including its theory that Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene were married and had children, which has prompted denouncements from many Christians.

Restless audience

The Cannes audience clearly grew restless as the movie dragged on as turn and a half hours and spun a long sequence of unbelievable revelations.

"I kept thinking of the Energizer Bunny, because it kept going, going, going and going, and still it's good way," said James Rocchi, a film critic for CBS-5 television in San Francisco and the online source Cinematical. "But Howard makes handsome films. He doesn't make bad ones, but he doesn't make great ones."

One especially incredulous line uttered by Hanks drew prolonged laughter and some catcalls, and the audience continued to jeer for much of the film's remainder.

Some people walked out during the movie's closing minutes, although there were fewer departures than many Cannes movies provoke among harsh critics. When the credits rolled, there were a few scattered boos and hisses, and there was none of the scattered applause even bad movies sometimes receive at Cannes.

Critics mingled and wrote late festivities, placing a very God organized who joins the search, as the movie's highlight, reporting favorite lines and delivering the most damned performances. One Britisher was cited for adding a scathing note of tragic pathos and double-edge sentimentality as a movie sequence who viewers use the theology.

Passionate protests

While critics in Cannes responded coolly to the movie, Christian leaders in their native countries have given more than its share of their critiques in the region where Christianity is overwhelmingly Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam.

The archbishop of Manila, Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales, has denounced both the movie and the novel as an attack on the identity of Jesus Christ. But he has stopped short of calling for a ban in the predominantly Roman

A FEATURED SHAPED was advertising "The Da Vinci Code" is located on the red carpet in preparations continue for the 59th International film festival in Cannes, southern France, on Tuesday May 16.

Catholic nation.

Monsignor Ligaseille, head of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB), cited the importance of preserving free speech in the Philippines. He said opponents of the film may discourage friends from watching it, but that the movie "has to be shown."

"Otherwise we will be the only country that will not show this film. Thirty-six countries have already reviewed the film and they have not banned it. It was we just

son of the Inner Age?" Legaseille said.

The MTRCB approved an adult rating for the movie but stopped short of using it "X," saying "it does not constitute a clear, express or direct attack on the Catholic Church or religion" and does not libel or defame any person.

Many Christians all over the world consider as blasphemy use of the movie's premise that Jesus Christ married Mary Magdalene and fathered children and that his descendants are still alive.

But Christians in Italy are especially worried that the movie may spread misinformation about their religion, which is a minority faith in many countries of the region.

"If Jesus Christ had a child and a wife, then Christianity would be destroyed," said Evangelical Presbyterian minister of the Thailand Protestant Churches Coordinating Committee.

A coalition of Christian groups in Thailand, including the Thai 90 Protestant Foundation, demanded that censors cut the last 20 minutes of the movie, which reveal Christians' beliefs are confirmed.

The country's censorship board agreed to snip the last 10 minutes, but the movie's owner, Columbia Pictures has opposed.

Hunger strike

In India, Joseph Dias, head of the Catholic Secular Forum, went on a hunger strike in downtown Bombay to protest the movie's release in his country, where most of the 1 billion population is Hindu.

After receiving more than 200 complaints, India's Information and Broadcasting Ministry Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi said he was going to see the movie for himself, which may delay by a day or two the film's scheduled release in the country on Friday.

In South Korea which has 13 million Protestants and 4.5 million Roman Catholics, a court ruled Tuesday that a Christian group's request for an injunction to block screenings lacked merit.

"It is clear that the novel and movie are all fiction ... there is no probability that the movie can make viewers mistakenly believe the contents of the movie are facts," chief judge Song Jin-hyun said in his ruling.

The Christian Council of Korea, an umbrella group of 63 South Korean Protestant denominations, said it respected the ruling but would lead a boycott of the movie, which it said defiles the sanctity of Jesus Christ and distorts facts.

Strength of faith

In Malaysia where nearly 60 percent are Muslims, Bishop Lim Cheng Hun said the strength of Christian faith alone would counter the movie.

"If Christians know their own faith, they will be strong enough. We can learn from their character as to whether they would rather watch the movie or not. That is their free choice," he said.

The Rev. Angelicus Ghosh, however, isn't taking any chances. Anglican Sydney Media, which promotes the Sydney diocese, has set up a website and launched movie theater ads challenging theories in the "The Da Vinci Code" book. A reminder with the release of the movie tickets.

Athletes unhappy

In another development, secretary of the National Organization for Affirmative and Hyperpituitary in the United States expressed unhappiness with the film's heavy, erotic moments, being an athletes, as described in the book.

Michael McGowan, an athlete who has been in the national, said "The Da Vinci Code" would be the 10th movie since 1960 to feature an evil athlete.

"The 'Da Vinci' character is just the latest in a long string," McGowan said. "The problem is there has been no exception. There are no evil-acts sympathetic or heroic characters with albinism that you can find in movies or popular culture."

AP

House still a millionaire's club

By Michael Lim Ubac

ALL MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, except the five party-list lawmakers, are millionaires.

Based on the lawmakers' statement of assets, Liabilities and Net Worth as of Dec. 31, 2005, only party-list Representatives Satur Ocampo, Rafael Mariano, Crispin Beltran, Teodoro Casiño and Joel Virador had assets worth less than P1 million.

Mariano, the national chair of the Bilaang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, was the poorest of them all with no assets and liabilities to speak of.

He total net worth is P18,537.12, representing his assembly salary (P20,000/mo.) and 13.

In contrast, Rep. Cynthia Villar, the richest legislator, with P739.8 million in total assets.

She had been on top of the millionaires' list of the House since replacing in 2001 her spouse—then Speaker and now Senator Manuel Villar—as representative of the lone district of Las Piñas.

The statement report was officially released yesterday by Emilia Calonge, director of the House Records Management Division, and Jose Ma. Antonio Ibanez, executive director of the House Administrative Management Bureau.

A lot second to Villar was President Macapagal-Arroyo's brother-in-law, Ignacio Arroyo of Negros Occidental (P287.3 million), Judy Ejercito of Iloilo (P285 million), Feliciano Belmonte of Iloilo (P211.5 million), Rafael Nantes of Quezon (P127.4 million), Eduardo Zarpana of Antique (P107 million), Gilbert Teodoro of Pangasinan (P102.6 million), Cheneldin Sahali of Surigao del Norte (P94.1 million), Jesus Pierre Emilio Jr. of Cagayan (P92.9 million) and Antonio Fernando of Davao del Norte (P92.3 million).

Speaker Jose de Venecia was in 34th slot with P67 million while Minority Leader Francis Escudero placed 177th with P6.9 million.

The President's son, Rep. Mikey Arroyo of Pampanga, took the 14th slot with P58.9 million, while then Surigao Rep. Reynaldo Pinan, now interior secretary, was 11th with P80.4 million.

Ironically 18 of the 21 party-list lawmakers, supposedly representing marginalized sectors, also belonged to the millionaires' club.

Rep. Rene Velante (Bohol), the son of El Shaddai leader Mike Velarde, was the richest among them with P30.9 million in net worth, followed by Acmad Ismawel Oliporos ng Tausug Pilipino), Eduardo "Sonny" Maquiraya (Alliance of Volunteer Educators), Gamay Ann Hechanova (Association of Philippine Electric Cooperatives), Abel Villanueva (Citizens' Battle Against Corruption), Edgar Valdez and Ernesto Pablo (Association of Philippine Electric Cooperatives), Honorata "Nani" Noel Uni Wenzel), Clemencio Soliveres of Bulacan, Bedanio Mercedes of Abra, Anne Theresa Hontiveros-Baraquel of Akbayan, Guillermo Luis Gonzalez Luyong of Bantay, Cirilo Roque Jr. of Gabriela, Liza Maza of Gabriela, Loretta Ann Rosales of Akbayan and Renato Magtubo of Bayan Muna.

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Doomed Pinay saved from Saudi beheading

By Volt Contreras and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

A FILIPINA CONVICTED of murder in Saudi Arabia has been saved from execution, thanks to the intervention of President Macapagal-Arroyo, and the victim's family has accepted part of a total of P26 million in blood money in a special presidential envoy assignment, it was disclosed.

Sarah Balabagan, 34, had been slashed for death by decapitation since June 14, 1995, when a Saudi court found the domestic helper guilty of killing her employer's wife, according to a statement issued by Ambassador Adelfo Aquino, special envoy to the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Detractors maintained she was framed in the killing of the woman, which took place in her employer's home four days after she started working in Saudi Arabia in November 1992, the statement said.

The victim's family finally accepted 500,000 Saudi riyals (P7 million) as a down payment during a court hearing in Dammam last May 18, the statement said, adding that the equivalent of P2.45 million had been donated by Aquino, and the rest was contributed by overseas Filipino workers.

Although Aquino has still had to negotiate with the victim's family to accept the payment of blood money and set the amount, the statement attributed the speedy settlement of the case to his Arroyo's intervention during her recent visit to Saudi Arabia, where she also released pardon for 138 jailed Filipino workers.

The statement said Balabagan's mother would be released from prison once the rest of the money is paid. But it did not say where the money would come from.

Meanwhile, nine of the 1,008 Filipino workers pardoned during Ms Arroyo's visit told the President in a thank-you letter that exit or foreign workers detained in Saudi Arabia were envious of their good fortune.

"We all clapped while watching you meet with the king and even other foreigners in our detention center also applauded," the workers said in their letter, released by Malacañang yesterday. "When we were told about the King's pardon, six Egyptian detainees and other Indonesian prisoners told us that they wished they were Filipinos so that you can also be their President."

The letter was signed by Rufin U. Ingusin, Calixtero D. Bandrabi, Darwin L. Asiaro, Rolissa U. Tubilla, Lito F. Martinez, Bobby Ramos, Angelito M. Ulanday, Rodello F. Ingal, and Melissa E. Borje.

"Your visit to Saudi Arabia and friendship with King Abdullah made it possible for our release to take place," the letter said.

"We will do our best to explain to our countrymen the cultural and legal differences that workers leaving for Saudi don. We must always consider and respect," the letter added.

OIC team here on mission

A FACT-finding mission, barely 10 days after the Sept. 1996 peace agreement between the government and the MNLF, to OIC-backed social reconstruction, rehabilitation for Mindanao's Muslim population.

The observers will basically look at both the physical and political infrastructures, the state of the natural resources, and the status of the various development projects in the autonomous region of Muslim Mindanao, two months before the deadline of dollars in foreign aid or loans have since passed.

"It is a fact-finding mission to evaluate and see on the ground... what was implemented, obstacles impending the implementation, the complaints of the parties involved, how are [OIC] can help to find ways and means to fully implement [it]," said Ambassador Sayed Kassim El-Masry, adviser to the OIC Secretary and head of the mission. — Volt Contreras

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Vendetta angle eyed in journalist's slay

Gunmen's identities known to cops

By Lolgo A. del Puerto and Nancy C. Carvajal

POLICE TENTATIVELY SAID THE killing of reporter Alfredo Ortodoxo was "not media-related."

Director Vidal Querol, Narcotics Unit-Region police chief, yesterday said personal vendetta could have been prompted the attack on the 40-year-old tabloid reporter.

"Right now, investigators are outside Metro Manila even King on the angle that the killing was not media-related," he said.

Chief Supt. Leopoldo Piscoso, Northern Police District director, said they had already identified the gunmen as well as the owner of the motorcycle used by the suspects.

He refused to give details, although a check with the records of the Land Transportation Office showed that the motorcycle was registered to a certain Roberto Enrique of Bacoor, Cavite.

Querol added that results of the initial investigation indicated that Ortodoxo's murder might be an "act of vengeance." It could have something to do with his anti-criminality campaign as a barangay official in Caloocan City, he explained.

Without elaborating, Querol said the murder could be linked to the death of a suspected narcotics peddler in the city.

He added that so far, the police had not found anything to show that Ortodoxo's death was related to his job as a media man.

"We have not seen that he had reported someone in his coverage, unlike the media killings in the provinces," Querol said.

This was supported by Senior Supt. Ernesto Borbe, Caloocan chief of police, and head of the group tasked to look into Ortodoxo's death.

Borbe said the killers could have been motivated by "personal vendetta."

Borbe said he had ordered his men to watch over Ortodoxo's family round-the-clock. "The wife expressed fear for her safety and that of their five small children," Supt. Ferrer's ID," he added.

Ortodoxo, a reporter of the tabloid Tobol, was the latest in a growing list of murdered journalists since 1986.

Two men on a motorcycle ambushed him on Tuesday near a pay station on C-4 Road in Tanza Farm Village, Caloocan City. Ortodoxo was on his way to his Malaria riding boat.

A stray bullet wounded by another motor Ortodoxo in the right leg during the attack, police said.

The gunmen fled after exchanging gunfire with operatives of the Department of Transportation and Communication, who happened to be passing by the area. One of the suspects was reportedly wounded in the firefight, police said.

Borbe said witnesses had given police a description of the gunmen, who were spotted near the reporter's house before he was killed. "The suspects were seen escaping their victim minutes after the reporter left enhanced in car," he added.

Ortodoxo was a barangay official and president of the Lupa Homeowners Association. He had come from his house in Phase 1 Lupa, Tonsuya, Malabon, when he was attacked.

The victim was the 75th journalist killed since 1986, according to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines.

ALIGHT Ortodoxo, who was also a barangay official, was inside this car when he was ambushed by motorcycle-riding gunmen near a gasoline station on C4 highway in Caloocan City. ALVIN TOMBLIN

WHAT'S INSIDE

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PAGEANT HOPEFULS
Candidates for this year's Miss Makati strike a pose with Miss Makati 2005 Sharlin Ladera (in black). VINA JAY

Grenade lobbed at QC school

By DJ Yap

AN UNIDENTIFIED PERSON lobbed a grenade at the Santo Domingo Academy, a private school in Barangay Holy Spirit, Quezon City, at about 2:30 a.m. yesterday.

No one was injured as though a dog was hit and killed by the squad, while a neighbor's car was damaged as a result of the blast, Batasan Police station commander Supt. Julius Abanes said.

Police are looking into a feud among members of the family who owns the school as a possible angle.

Domingo Gamos, owner of Santo Domingo Academy who has custody the compound, said the police he suspects that one of his own children could be behind the incident, adding that he had received an unsigned death threat on May 10.

Legal battle

The Gamos are entangled in a legal and personal battle over ownership of the school, Abanes said.

Because of the squabble, Gamos had asked the Department of Education to close down the school, which offers elementary and secondary schooling, but this only angered his children, he added.

The rift had been gradually exchanged between the school owners and his children over the dispute, Abanes said.

Abanes, however, did not identify Gamos's children.

Flood control program under way in Metro

By Tara Y. Quicmando

THE METROPOLITAN MANILA Development Authority has launched "Oplan Linis Imis, Iwas Baha," a two-fold program aimed at preventing or reducing flooding in the metropolis with the start of the rainy season.

"Our flood control operations continue throughout the year but this time, we will also expand to outdoors to stop throwing garbage into waterways because that makes our job doubly difficult," said MMDA Deputy Chair Corazon Lozano.

Under the campaign, MMDA personnel will conduct "cleaning and dredging of silt and debris in creeks, inlets and drainage systems" and other waterways from this month until June. At the same time, they will also conduct an information drive to encourage residents to do their part in preventing floods.

The waterways that will be cleaned up by the MMDA flood control crew are the navigable Creek and Estero de Pandacan in Manila, Estero de Tripa de Gallina in Pasay City, the San Juan/Mariano Marcos River, the Tullahan River, and the Bonanza River in Valenzuela City.

They will also clear of garbage the canteens in Binondoc, San Lazaro, Tutuban, San Miguel, Sampaloc, Caloocan, Novotas, Pasig and Concordia all in Manila and the Bonanza, Socio and San Vicente creeks in Quezon City.

Pasig gives chocolate factory 1-month extension

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE PASIG CITY GOVERNMENT yesterday extended for another month the temporary reopening of a chocolate factory owned by Universal Robina Corp. after the factory complied with pollution-control regulations.

"We issued them another temporary closure order but one month. But the factory will still be under close monitoring," City Environment and Natural Resources Officer Chief Raquel Santiaguin said this morning.

She said the chocolate factory in Barangay Bagong Ilog had been using "less sulfur fuel" as well as an "automatic anti-pollution device."

The factory in Barangay Bagong Ilog was closed on April 20 following complaints from nearby residents about the noise and smoke emitted by the plant, causing respiratory and skin illnesses.

Company officials had released a statement questioning the closure order, saying it had "no legal basis."

The plant manufacturers popular products like Nips Chocolates, Cream-O and Premio Lemon.

Seven days later, the company was allowed to reopen temporarily for 15 days subject for assessment.

At the 15-day reopening to operating lapsed the other day, city officials again held a public hearing with the affected residents and URC officials.

Assessment

The city government finally agreed to allow the company to continue its operations for another month, subject to another round of assessment.

The is not the first time a URC plant in Pasig City was ordered closed for pollution.

In October 2005, the city shut down the company's sulfur plant, claiming that the smoke had caused illnesses and asthma attacks among residents in Barangay Rosario.

But the sulfur plant resumed operations only days later after securing a temporary restraining order from the Court of Appeals.

Barangay chair shot dead in Las Piñas

By Jocelyn R. Uy and Luige A. del Puerto

BE WAS JUST A FEW STEPS away from his house, but he never made it home.

Lloyd de la Cruz, chair of Barangay Almanza Uno in Las Piñas City, was gunned down by four men in front of his house on Gladiola Street, T.S. Cruz Subdivision, at around 5:45 p.m. Tuesday.

The 44-year-old De Castro and lived at least five decades in the area and was on his left side, said city police chief Supt. Josephus Asuque.

One of the suspects, however, was caught by barangay watchmen who rushed to the scene when they heard the gunshots.

Lloyd de la Cruz was charged with murder in the Las Piñas prosecutor's office yesterday.

Witnesses told the police that De Castro was talking to someone in front of his house when four men approached him and shot him several times, Asuque said.

Fearing the gunfire, the victim's wife, Julita, ran out of the house and saw her husband lying bloodied on the ground.

"Because of the suspects, holding a gun, pursued her from evening close to her husband," Asuque said the witnesses.

The suspects fled after the incident but watchmen and by members chased them and caught De la Cruz. The three others escaped. Recovered from the suspect was the victim's necklace and a .45-cal pistol. Police found seven empty shells and two slugs at the crime scene.

The motive behind the killing has yet to be determined. But Asuque said the victim could have offended some people. "As barangay chair, he addressed many problems in his area such as illegal vending and squatting," Asuque said. "He had been very active in these campaigns and those are the things that our investigators are looking into," he added.

NCRPO police chief Vidal Quevral (right) and Southern police director Wilfredo Garcia with Lloyd dela Cruz, a suspect in the killing of a barangay captain in Las Piñas City

No crackdown on smelly drivers, but being neat counts

By Tarra V. Quismundo

NOT ONLY WOULD THEY 40 even more restaurants, they would also look good.

An official of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority yesterday urged owners and operators of public utility vehicles to encourage their drivers to be neat conscious of their personal hygiene.

MMDA Traffic Operations Center Executive Director Angelito Vergel de Dios said that contrary to newspaper reports, they were not going to crack down on smelly drivers and conductors.

"Most of all, here are you going to implement that? Will our enforcers go around and smell drivers and conductors one by one?" he asked.

Responsibility

"That's the responsibility of the operators and owners. They can really enforce good grooming among their drivers and that would even be helpful to their business because who would want to ride in a bus with a driver or conductor?" urged De Dios told the reporters.

He hinted the clarification following reports that the MMDA had ordered its enforcers to apprehend "unhygienic" drivers.

MMDA chair Bayani Fernando had also denied giving such an order.

"All we can do is remind drivers and conductors that they should not have an offensive smell, that they should not have body odor, bad breath or wear dirty clothes. They should at least be presentable because they are engaged in public service," said Vergel de Dios.

He added that having neat employees would even give bus companies and jeepney operators an edge over their competitors.

Vergel de Dios said the agency has long been promoting good grooming among those losers in the transport industry, particularly by imposing a dress code on drivers.

He said drivers and conductors should wear a shirt with a collar and sleeves instead of a sando, sleeveless undershirt, pants instead of shorts, and shoes or sandals in place of slippers.

DRIVERS who look and smell good have an edge over those who don't practice proper hygiene, says the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority.

NCRPO head vows to make Metro safe for students

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION Police Office Director Vidal Quevral said the police force was ready to make the metropolis not only safe for students but also "conducive to learning" when classes open in June.

"We will make their environment conducive to learning. We will remove all distractions so they will do everything that will harass them while they are studying," Quevral said during the inauguration of the new Muntinlupa City Police Station on Tuesday afternoon.

Quevral also said the agency has been promoting good grooming among those losers in the transport industry, particularly by imposing a dress code on drivers.

He said drivers and conductors should wear a shirt with a collar and sleeves instead of a sando, sleeveless undershirt, pants instead of shorts, and shoes or sandals in place of slippers.

He said he would be keeping an eye on at least 72 public and 82 private elementary schools, high schools and colleges in the cities of Marikina, Muntinlupa, Pasig and the town of San Juan.

Police presence

Policemen would also be deployed in areas around schools as well as in commando and mobile in anticipation of mall goers rushing to buy school supplies in the next few days.

"Our Special Weapons and Tactics team is always ready to respond. We also have our District Mobile force to conduct patrols," Quevral added.

Couple dead in QC fire

By DJ Yap

A COUPLE SUFFOCATED AND his wife were killed in a two-hour fire that destroyed their dormitory in Quezon City the other night.

The blaze started at around 10:40 p.m. inside the house of Joseph and Norma Warren in Olde Heights, Barangay Bagong Silangan, according to the police, who investigated the case to consolidate with fire officials.

Volunteers from the Quezon Fire Brigade were the first to respond to the alarm. But it took them over an hour to put out the flames, said investigator PO3 Rodolfo Torres. The fire was finally put out at 11:45 p.m.

When firefighters went inside the dormitory they discovered the burnt bodies of the Warrens' couple, police said.

Neighbors said they had difficulty entering the Warrens' house door despite nearby fires about to the fire.

Police said the cause of the fire was still being investigated.

METROBRIEFS

Additional benefits

UNDAY single parents until or you could marry to get. In a bid to protect the rights of single parents in the city, this amount has been increased from one month to 24 months.

Under the ordinance, sponsored by Ria Irish Pineda, emphasized two provisions of the law which should be strictly implemented. First, a free first work bachelor must be provided to any single parent employees as long such does not affect the productivity of the worker and company. Second, any solo parent employee who has been retained as an employee of service provider must be granted parental leave of not more than seven days. Violation of the ordinance within three (3) days or fine not exceeding P5,000 or face imprisonment of 30 days, or both, depending on the court's discretion.

Jovelyn E. Uy

Grand homecoming

THE 1983-1988 School Class of Jose Abad Santos (Arellano University) will hold its alumni homecoming on July 29, Friday, May 19, at the Archbishop's Palace in Intramuros, Pasay City, Fr. Florencio B. Bellido, homecoming president, said members of Class '83 can attend the celebration from 6 o'clock. Registration starts at 6:30 p.m., to be followed by cocktails, program and fellowship. For more information, please contact Cynthia Angeles-Cado (0911-890 1388) and Rhyman "Chino" Cayetano San Pedro (0917-8862478).

UE reunion

ALL top-tier officers of the University of the East Student Councils who belong to the Super Group Party (Supers, its friends in party-list and the Alyansa ng Mag-Aaral sa Pamantasang Silangan (AMPIL), are invited to a grand reunion on May 20, 6 p.m. at the Pergola Room, 8th Magnolia Street near corner E. Lopez Road, Quezon City. For details, please contact Roy Vilora (0921-8004389), NDP (Ed. Ila Lapaz (0927-5749189) or e-mail: uelapitsingfly@yahoo.com.

LAST DAYS OF SUMMER
A BOY takes an early morning dip in Manila Bay, happy to be outdoors again after days of rain brought about by storm "Caloy."

Dad proposes weekend use of parking lots

By DJ Yap

CALLING ALL BUSINESSES THAT CLOSE ON weekends: Please allow the public to use your parking spaces.

Quezon City Councilor Ishol Lagman Jr. is urging establishments that do not operate on Saturdays and Sundays to open their parking areas to the public.

He noted that patrons of restaurants, bars and salons double in number on Saturdays and Sundays, resulting in a shortage of parking spaces.

But establishments like banks that are closed on weekends usually have plenty of room to spare for people looking for a place to park, Lagman said.

For patrons

He urged these businesses to be more accommodating to patrons of adjacent establishments by allowing the use of their parking spaces.

But Lagman pointed out in an interview that compliance would be compulsory, not mandatory.

He said private businesses, by law, still have the right to refuse others from parking on their property.

Leftist murders not easy to solve

THE KILLINGS OF MILITANTS don't have the approval of the government or the military, they're not sure.

Why? Because the government and the military needed the services of suspects in the killings. What's scary enough is do something that would be held in court's doorsteps?

More likely, some members of political activities were interested by military men out to avenge the arrest of their colleagues. Three military men probably supported the victims of executing with the New People's Army (NPA).

But the killings were not sanctioned by the government or the military establishment.

The other killings of militants might have something to do with the continuing purge in the communist ranks. The victims were probably suspected of spying for the government.

Still another reason for the killings, still not have to do with politics, but the settling of personal grudges.

* * *

Police Deputy Director General Avelino Razon, head of Task Force Usig, formed to investigate the killings, will have a hard time of his own job.

Razon could not even order the murder of Bineda police Supt. Rhoelo Martinez when he was Director of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO).

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

Heroism was greeted cheers while he was about to enter his previous jobs. Mess, Manila.

Whoever snatched truck the Mercure member parole, how can he solve the killings of politicians which are much more complicated than the Martinez assassination?

* * *

How could the opposition be so stupid as to include the members of

militants in its impeachment complaint that it will now die before the House of Representatives?

The opposition might as well also include the killings of journalists in the impeachment complaint. After all, recent Gloria have journalists because they have smeared all her enemies!

The opposition would be well advised not to waste people's money on trivial things.

* * *

A retired Armed Forces general has allegedly built a mansion inside Westgrove, a millionaires' haven, in Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

The house is estimated to have cost the retired general from P30 million to 400 million. That explains the price of the lot which is valued at P7,000 to P9,000 per square meter.

He wonder this general was scrounging for money when he was about to retire, according to my source in the AFP.

This is the same guy who, while still in the service, proposed an issue of being done and honest by disbanding a corrupt unit that supplied arms to the military in the field.

In fact, he was corrupt in the core. My sources said he didn't spare small projects just to be could save more them. He even allegedly dipped into the fund for the guerilla allowance of his subordinates.

Here's a hint on his identity: he was the most unpopular and reviled general when he retired.

You'll hear more about this retired general in subsequent columns. As they say in Filipino, abangan.

* * *

I'm no longer surprised why this retired general love longer incumbent in getting an ambassadorial post.

He's afraid of being grilled in the Hungarous committee and other perpetrator that he reportedly acquired while he was still in the service.

My sources say he'll just waiting to get a station assessor that would not require his designation being approved by the Commission on Appointments.

Bush allows Congress probe of domestic spying

WASHINGTON—THE WHITE House, in an abrupt reversal, has agreed to let the full Senate and House of Representatives intelligence committees review President George W. Bush's domestic spying program, lawmakers said on Tuesday.

Republican chairmen of the Senate and House panels disclosed the shift was clear before a Senate confirmation hearing for Air Force Gen. Michael Hayden as the new CIA director, which is expected to be dominated by concern over the program.

The chairmen said separately that Bush had agreed to full committee oversight of his Terrorist Surveillance Program rather than the more limited briefings allowed up to now.

The White House, under political pressure, did agree to conduct a set of briefings for the two full committees earlier this year, but those sessions did not disclose operational details about the secret spying.

Initiated after the Sept. 11 attacks, the program lets the National Security Agency eavesdrop without a court warrant on communications of phone calls and e-mails made by US citizens if one party is suspected to have links with terrorists.

It has drawn fire from critics among rights groups and lawmakers who believe Bush overstepped his constitutional authority.

The White House has sought to avoid full committee oversight by limiting briefings to subcommittees from each panel. Initially, the administration shared program details only with the chairman and vice chairmen of the committees and party leaders in the House and Senate.

It became apparent that in order to have a fully informed confirmation hearing, all members of any committee needed to know the full details and broader of the presidential program," Sen. Pat Roberts of Kansas, who heads the 15-member Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said in a statement.

Democrats, who have long pushed for full hearings, said the change would bring the White House into compliance with the National Security Act of 1947, which requires the executive branch to keep Congress informed on intelligence matters.

"The White House, for the first time, is showing signs that they are serious about oversight," said Democrat Sen. John Rockefeller of West Virginia, the Senate panel's vice chairman.

A full Senate committee briefing was scheduled for Wednesday afternoon. Full oversight was expected to replace subcommittee reviews that have been in place since earlier this year, said committee staff members from both chambers.

Hayden, who was the program's architect as NSA director from 1999 to 2005, was expected to face a blistering round of questions on this spying at a Thursday confirmation hearing before Roberts' committee. Republicans and Democrats have said Hayden's confirmation would depend on his answers would be. Reuters

Suicide bomber kills 7 in Russia

MOSCOW—A SUICIDE BOMBER killed seven people including a top Russian policeman on Wednesday when he drove his car into a police convoy in the southern Russian region of Ingushetia.

Among the dead were Ingushetia's interior minister, two of his guards, and four civilians, a police spokesperson said.

The news came simultaneously with a report from Interfax news agency that unknown gunmen had killed the governor of a detention center in the region of Kamyshayevo, Cherkessia, further from Chechnya but also increasingly prone to violence.

Rebels have pledged total war against police in the North Caucasus, saying they are collaborating with Russian occupiers.

Islamist militants on Wednesday published a statement from a rebel commander in Ingushetia, who pledged such attacks would increase.

"This morning the deputy minister was going to work from the village of Chemkoye to the town of Nazran. A car rammed by the suicide bomber drove into the road from a side street ... at the moment the convoy was passing," the spokesperson said.

"An investigating group is working at the site to find out the details," he said. Reuters

POLICE keep watch near a bus burned down by unidentified attackers May 16 at Jardim Telmo video neighborhood, northern outskirts of Sao Paulo, Brazil. Prison riots and a violent offensive by a powerful gang which has killed 150 has plunged Latin America's largest city into fear. —AP

Sau Paulo police strike back, kill 33 hoods

SAO PAULO, BRAZIL—POLICE killed 33 suspected gang members and marshaled motorists at roadblocks as officers sought to quell a wave of attacks on police stations, streets and buses that had plunged South America's largest city into fear.

While gang attacks fell off sharply Tuesday, the death toll since the violence began Friday soared to 153 as police struck back at the gangs who had rampaged to protest the prison transfer of their leaders.

Officers "acted within the law, but that doesn't mean we have to let these hoodlums act," Mexico Antonio Ferreira Pinto said. Pinto, a top Sao Paulo state law enforcement official, said reporters. He did not give specifics about the killings.

Authorities said 33 suspected criminals were killed Tuesday, bringing to 71 the number of suspected gang members killed since Friday night. Sao Paulo's state government said in a statement. The statement said 40 police officers and jail guards and three civilians were also killed.

More fatalities piled in the pale sky announced by the state government's public security agency, said spokesperson Caroline Farias. And nine prisoners died in prisons overseen by the state government's separate penitentiary division, the agency said in a statement. Neither Farias nor penitentiary spokesperson Marcelo Daniel knew how they died.

With guns drawn Tuesday, plainclothes police in a subsoil of South America's largest city stopped and frisked motorists in a hunt for more gang members.

The crime spree showed the strength of organized crime in the financial and industrial heart of Brazil, and it sent fear rippling through the metropolis of 18 million. AP

India doctors protest caste quota

AHMEDABAD, INDIA—DOCTORS and medical students blocked roads and skipped work across large parts of India on Tuesday as protests spread against a controversial government move to reserve more college seats for lower castes.

Medical care at state-run hospitals in the western state of Gujarat and West Bengal in the east was disrupted, leaving thousands of patients stranded without treatment.

In the national capital New Delhi, students, striking interns and doctors set up makeshift treatment centers in the camps. The move was aimed at making sure severe patients were treated while underlining the protest, they said.

Despite the protests, the government has said it would go ahead with its move to more than double the proportion of seats reserved for lower-caste students.

If the decision becomes law, it will see nearly half the places in top educational institutes reserved for the country's traditionally underprivileged groups.

This has sparked fury among upper-caste students, especially medical students, who have to compete fiercely to secure few hundred seats in medical, engineering and management schools.

"If the government does not answer us, why should we work for them?" said Sumit Pandhal, a medical student from Ahmedabad. "I think we should resign en masse from hospitals in Ahmedabad, Gujarat's main city. Reuters

RICH of meaning from the ancient Moche culture.

Peru woman of 450 A.D.: Warrior-princess or ruler?

A MUMMY OF MYSTERY has aroused delight in Peru.

She was a woman who died some 1,500 years ago in the heyday of the Moche culture, well before the rise of the Incas. Her imposing tomb suggests someone of high status. Her decorated mandala are covered with red pigment and bear tattoos.

But the most striking aspect of the discovery, archaeologists said Tuesday, is not the offerings of gold and conspicuous status, or the elaborate wrapping of her body in fine textiles, but the teeth or grave goods.

Her ears surrounded by stunning turquoise and needles, birthing is woman, and 2 ceremonial war clubs and 20 spear throwers—sticks that propel spears with far greater force—items never found before in the burial of a woman of the Moche (pronounced MOH-chay).

Was she a warrior-princess, or perhaps a ruler?

"She is either, but somewhat of necessity," said Dr. John Verano, a physical anthropologist at Tulane University who worked with the Peruvian archaeologists who made the discovery last year.

Dr. Christopher B. Donnan of the University of California, Los Angeles, was not a member of the research team but reviewed the mummy and the tomb soon after the find. "It's among the richest female Moche burials ever found," said Donnan, an archaeologist of Peruvian culture. "The tomb contained things usually found either exclusively in male or female burials—a real mystery."

The National Geographic Society-sponsored discovery and its publishing details in its magazine's June issue. The excavations, more than 400 miles northeast of Lima, were supported by the Augusto N. Wiese Foundation of Peru.

The Moche culture flourished in the coastal valleys of northern Peru in the first 800 years A.D. The woman's tomb was near the summit of a pyramid called Huaca Cao Viejo, a cathedral of the Moche religion.

Bruning's discovery was unusual in a model that the mummy was a young adult. Lying near her was the skeleton of another young woman who was apparently sacrificed by strangulation with a hemp rope, which was still around her neck. Such sacrifices were common in Andean cultures. Radiocarbon analysis of the rope indicated that the burial occurred around A.D. 450. AFP

NOB Smith selects saw overweight Maggie and her caretaker Lorraine Treadmill at the Alaska Zoo in Anchorage, May 16.

Overweight elephant won't try treadmill

By Mary Pemberton

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA—SO FAR, it's only the trainers at the Alaska Zoo who seem to be breaking into a sweat.

They've so far made little progress trying to coax Maggie, a somewhat cantankerous Asian elephant, onto the world's first treadmill for a pachyderm.

For two months, Maggie's trainers have used her favorite treats—carrots, apples, carrots, peanuts and the dark, bittersweet stem and sweet potatoes—to entice the 9,000-pound (9,000 kilogram) elephant into stepping on the $100,000 (about $70,000) piece of equipment.

"She has even had on the treadmill and has touched it a third time on it," zoo director Joe Lampl said Tuesday. "Every six inches forward is a new goal. There are a lot of steps to go."

Maggie's trainers and zoo staff aren't discouraged.

"It is just a matter of getting that fourth foot up off the concrete floor," said elephant trainer Bob Smith.

Maggie arrived at the zoo in 1982 as a calf when her herd in Kruger National Park in South Africa was culled. She has been alone since Dec. 14, 1997, when the zoo's other elephant died at age 31 of a liver infection.

The treadmill is part of a $1 million (about one-fifth) program the zoo launched two years ago to improve Maggie's life after deciding to keep Alaska's only elephant instead of placing her at another facility, perhaps in a warmer climate, with more elephants.

The zoo's program for Maggie included doubling the size of the elephant house and installing new heating, light and ventilation systems, including upgraded radiant heats in the concrete floor. Her outdoor paddock was doubled in size.

Feeding stations were placed high so that she now stretches for her food. Treats are hidden around her enclosure to help exercise her brain. She's provided birch logs to strip the bark off.

The extra activity and a diet have helped Maggie shed about 1,000 pounds (500 kilograms). "My drive isn't as a good weight now. It is just a matter of maintaining it," Smith said.

The Alaska Zoo is letting Maggie call the shots. Trainers can tell just by looking at her that some days she wants to train. Other days not.

"They learn every day of their lives. They're like people," Smith said. "You like it, school, there were days you didn't want to be in the house, huh?" AP

Discovery could help fight 'superbugs'

NEW YORK—RESEARCHERS have found a potentially valuable new antibiotic in a soup of soil from South Africa.

Using a novel screening technique, scientists from Merck & Co. have found a chemical compound that is effective against germs that have developed resistance to existing antibiotics. The discovery could provide a vital weapon in the ongoing battle against infectious bacteria, which are constantly evolving defenses to the drugs used against them.

"We need to continuously find antibiotics," said Shoo Singh, Merck's director of natural product chemistry.

With the recent emergence of "superbugs" that are resistant to even the most potent antibiotics, the need for a real possibility that in the near future some infections will simply be untreatable.

Part of the problem is that most antibiotics are just modifications of drugs that have been around for half a century. Another part of the problem is that despite all the recent advances in genetics and molecular biology, the hunt for new antibiotics is still conducted by trial and error.

The Merck researchers addressed both problems with a clever genetic trick that made an existing drug-hunting process more effective and also targeted novel types of antibiotics.

Their innovation was to use enzymes of fungi, plants and soil, or natural substances against bacteria with a genetically engineered bacillus that becomes resistant. Bacillus is a harmless bacterium that is weakened, any compound that harmed them would have a more dramatic effect and thus be easier to identify.

The Merck scientists also chose the genetic handicap carefully, placing it in a metabolic pathway that is not attacked by any major existing antibiotics. That increased the likelihood that any promising compound they discovered would be something for which the bacteria had not yet developed a resistance. AP

The WORLD

Edna Lorenzo B. Bueza

Iran: No to 'chocolates for gold' offer

Ahmadinejad rejects European incentives, including light-water reactor

TEHRAN—IRAN'S PRESIDENT MAHMOUD AHmadinejad on Wednesday rejected a European plan to offer his country incentives, including a light-water nuclear reactor, in return for giving up uranium enrichment.

"Do you think you are dealing with a 6-year-old child to whom you can give some walnuts and chocolates and get gold from him?" Ahmadinejad told thousands of people in central Iran.

European nations have weighed adding a light-water reactor to a package of incentives meant to persuade Tehran to permanently give up uranium enrichment—or have the threat of UN Security Council sanctions.

The United States, Israel and the European Union believe that Iran is using its civilian nuclear program as a cover to produce nuclear weapons.

The United States, Britain and France support taking strong measures against Tehran for violating a UN Security Council demand that Iran halt all enrichment-related activities. Russia and China, the other two veto-wielding powers on the council, oppose sanctions.

Uranium enriched to low levels is used to fuel electricity-generating nuclear power plants. Enriched to more than 90 percent, it becomes suitable for use in weapons.

Senior diplomats and EU government officials said Tuesday that the incentive plans were being discussed among France, Britain and Germany as part of a possible package to be presented to senior representatives of the five permanent UN Security Council members at a meeting in London. All spoke on condition of anonymity because of the confidential nature of the information.

"The Iranian nation won't accept any suspension or end" to its uranium enrichment activities, Ahmadinejad said in a speech broadcast live on state television.

He said Iran trusted the Europeans Tehran in 2003 and suspended its nuclear activities as a gesture to Iranian negotiations over its nuclear program, only to have the European countries subsequently demand Iran permanently halt its uranium enrichment program.

The 2003 deal called for guarantees that Iran's nuclear program wouldn't diverge from civilian ends toward producing weapons. Iran agreed to the request, but negotiations collapsed in August 2005 when the Europeans said the best guarantee was for Iran to permanently give up its uranium enrichment program.

Iran responded by resuming uranium reprocessing activities at its uranium conversion facility in Isfahan, central Iran.

It resumed research and uranium enrichment earlier this year after the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN nuclear watchdog, referred Tehran to the UN Security Council. AP

US releases film of 9/11 attack on Pentagon

WASHINGTON—THE US GOVernment Tuesday released video clips for the first time showing how a hijacked airliner struck the Pentagon and exploded into a ball of fire on Sept. 11, 2001.

Two security cameras at a Pentagon parking lot caught the moment that American Airlines Flight 77 slammed into the south west side of the military headquarters.

Although the two video clips last about two minutes, the none of the jet is seen but only a fraction of a second is one flickerbefore the explosion.

A huge ball of flame rises from the building and black smoke starts gushing out.

The attack, which came shortly after al-Qaeda hijackers flew two airliners into the World Trade Center in New York, killed 189 people on the jet and inside the defense department headquarters in the Washington suburb.

The Pentagon handed the videos over to Judicial Watch, a watchdog group that sued for its release.

The lack of film evidence of the attack had fueled conspiracy theories that the government had purposely withheld images that would show that it was not a commercial airliner that struck the Pentagon.

Those theories have been fueled or exaggerated by the Internet.

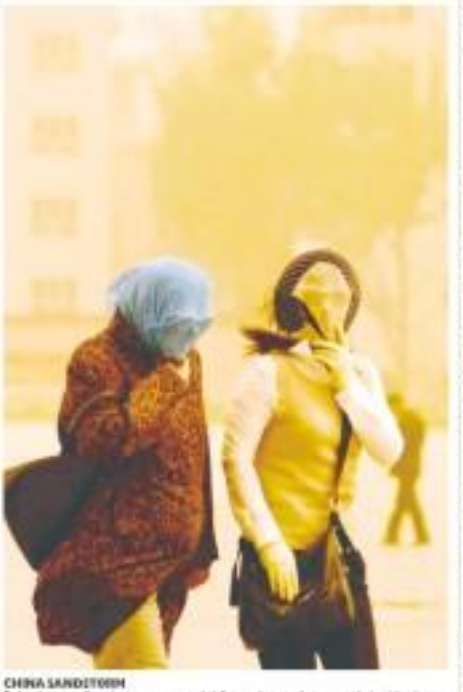
Other conspiracy theorists presented as mini-documentaries have circulated more than on the Internet.

The justice department had previously blocked demands for the release of the videos on grounds that it was evidence in the prosecution of al-Qaida plotter Zacarias Moussaoui.

During the Moussaoui trial, prosecutors showed pictures of burning bodies and human remains as well as images of the explosion triggered by the Pentagon crash.

But with Moussaoui convicted and sentenced to life in prison earlier this month for his role in the Sept. 11 conspiracy, the justice department agreed to the videos' release, officials said. AFP

IMAGE shows American Airlines Flight 77 crashing into the Pentagon. AP/FILE



CHINA SANDSTORM

Pedestrians use veils and scarves to protect their faces and eyes against strong wind and dust in Hohhot, capital city of north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, May 16. The area is often blasted by strong sandstorms. —

Beslan suspect guilty of terrorism

VLADIKAVKAZ, RUSSIA—MAGOMED Evloyev, the lone surviving hostage-taker in the 2004 Beslan school massacre, is guilty of terrorism, acts of terrorism and murder, a judge ruled Thursday as he began reading the verdict in a landmark trial.

"The court has established that Evloyev took part in an armed attack and a hostage-taking ... that he committed murder against defenseless people," said Tamerlan Aguzarov, chief justice of the high court in the southern Russian province of North Ossetia.

"He committed an act of terrorism with the aim of influencing the decisions of the authorities," the judge told the court, reading from a text of the verdict.

Under the Russian legal system, the court's assertion that Evloyev, a Chechen man in his mid-20s, had committed the crimes he was charged with was not the same as a formal announcement of conviction of those crimes. But legal experts said it left no doubt that conviction lay ahead.

"He cannot be acquitted," said Taimuraz Chendzhoyants, a lawyer representing the families of the victims, who said the formulation of the verdict read by the judge made it clear that the court had no doubt about Evloyev's guilt.

Court officials said the reading of the entire verdict in the trial would take several days.

The state prosecutor in the trial voiced satisfaction at Tuesday's verdict reading.

"The judge confirmed Evloyev's guilt under all eight articles of the indictment," Deputy Prosecutor General Nikolai Shepel was quoted as saying by ITAR-TASS news agency.

The Beslan hostage-taking had demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya, where they have been fighting against separatist rebel forces for most of the past 12 years.

Chechen rebel warlord Shamil Basayev claimed responsibility for the Beslan attack. AFP

North, South Koreans in Japan reconcile after decades of hostility

TOKYO—KOREANS IN JAPAN loyal to the communist North or the capitalist South announced Wednesday they would work to reconcile after half a century of hostility, mirroring reconciliation efforts on the Korean peninsula.

Leaders of the chief associations of Korean residents held their first meeting since they were forced to take sides after World War II.

Analysts said the thaw was beginning to reality, as the approximately 700,000 Koreans in Japan integrate and lose their affiliation with their ancestral countries.

Japanese Koreans, the country's largest minority, are mostly descendants of people who immigrated or were rendered during Japan's 1910-1945 occupation of the Korean peninsula.

"Welcome," leaders of the North Korean association Chongryon said as they received the pro-Seoul Mindan group at their headquarters, which serves as Pyongyang's de facto embassy in Tokyo in the absence of diplomatic ties.

After signing a joint statement, Mindan President Ha Byong-ok and Chongryon chair Ri Hun-mol shook each other's hands twice and then hugged each other.

The two groups said they would start reconciliation efforts with symbolic events, such as jointly celebrating the independence of Koreans from Japanese colonial rule on Aug. 15.

"We confirmed with each other that we will firmly connect our long-standing aspirations and ambitions into reconciliation and harmonization," a joint statement said.

Chongryon and Mindan "hereby declare our will to contribute to our homeland's integration and prosperity in the 21st century," it said.

The two Koreas are moving closer together under the "sunshine policy" launched by former South Korean president and Nobel laureate Kim Dae-jung, who travelled to Pyongyang in 2000 for a historic summit.

But the reconciliation in Japan also reflects declining support for the two groups. Around 130,000 Koreans take Japanese nationality each year, usually through marriage.

However, some 40 Japanese nationalists picketed the Chongryon building, which is closely monitored by Japanese intelligence. They held a banner calling the North a "terrorist state" as the pro-Seoul delegation arrived.

Mindan says it has 500,000 members. Chongryon does not give an official number of its membership, which is believed to have fallen sharply since 2002 when North Korea admitted kidnapping Japanese citizens during the Cold War. AFP

LEADERS of pro-Seoul and pro-Pyongyang Korean residents' groups in Japan embrace after agreeing to reconcile. —

Poisoned town wants Saddam's chemical suppliers to pay

HALABJA, IRAQ—AN X-RAY OF Kamil Abdel Qader's lungs shows a lower third that is entirely scarred—lasting damage from the poisonous gas that rained down on his Iraqi Kurdish town of Halabja in 1988.

Doctors say he needs to get a fist-size chunk of tissue removed from his damaged lungs if he is going to survive, but he still wonders himself if he really can.

The war of his family of eight died as they fled the gas, some dropping before his very eyes as they tried to flee into the hills.

Abdel Qader wants payback—for his dead family, his shattered lungs and most of all for Halabja and most of the estimated 100,000 others of an attack that claimed 5,000 lives and destroyed a town.

The Halabja Chemical Victims' Society, which Abdel Qader's small non-profit organization, wants the companies and governments which helped Saddam Hussein amass his stockpiles to pay compensation.

The Kurds would go to the first hundred survivors of the attack that came to the waiting days of the Iran-Iraq war that raged between 1980 and 1988.

Though Abdel Qader blames the attack on Saddam and the massacre's mind's a sweeping anti-Kurd campaign, Ali Hassan al-Majid, dubbed "Chemical Ali" for this attack and others, he and controversial companies from around the world shared responsibility for helping arm the regime.

"We are trying to find the companies that helped the Iraqi government get chemical weapons for Saddam. We are trying to tell the world what happened here," said an emotional Abdel Qader as he sat nostalgged on a couple in his home.

The names of specific firms which sold Iraq the equipment and expertise needed to assemble its chemical arsenal have never been released.

A UN Special disarmament commission UNSCOM set up after the 1991 Gulf War ever Kuwait to investigate Saddam's weapons arsenals pressured its sources in order to encourage disclosure.

It is believed that Iran as the US government provided Saddam with intelligence and chain-use technology, such as helicopters, to bombard Iran, a long list of Western firms made fortunes exporting chemicals and armaments to Washington's one-time ally.

Abdel Qader has suffered severe health problems for the past 18 years, including chronic bronchitis, severe pulmonary fibrosis and scarring of the left cornea—conditions that doctors said affect a high number of Halabja residents.

Saddam is currently on trial on charges of ordering the killing of 148 Shiite villagers in the mid-1980s, after which he will face charges of genocide for the "Anfal" campaign against the Kurds in which an estimated 180,000 died.

Prosecutors are expected to press charges linked to Halabja in a separate case, but Abdel Qader and other Kurdish activists and victims say they should also prosecute those who gave Saddam the tools of his trade.

"Those who are suffering need a lot of money to get treatment in Western hospitals. We want to see those who helped Saddam punished and our rights restored," said Abdel Qader, who needs costly medical treatment abroad. AFP

ERIC SOM Diaz of SWCA team celebrates after crossing the finish line to win the 6th stage. AFP PHOTO

SPORTS
Editor Teddyboy S. Melendrez

Santy nears Tour title

By Pharaoh B. Cardillo

STA. ROSA, LAGUNA—TIME FOR THE counter.

Except for one fleeting moment, Santy Saucedo has made the ninth stage of the Tour Philippines Tinubuan Padyak Pinoy an uncontested one for his closest pursuer yesterday and set the stage for his date with cycling immortality.

Saucedo clung to the overall lead with determination, sticking to Frederick Feliciano like glue after briefly losing him in "Enchong Dito" to finish in the first wave of riders that Deterna Diona neared to the area.

All that stands in the way of Saucedo is a 147.4-kilometer grind from Tagaytay via Tagaytay, Batangas, and back earlier before joining the champion's roll that includes some of the greatest, most illustrious names in the sport.

Saul, of course, Feliciano.

But it seems that Santy has got it all figured out. "Pump lang pump sa (It's all or nothing)," Saucedo said, moments after keeping the overall jersey of fellow Feliciano and his overnight 4-minute and 7-second advantage over the unassuming cyclist.

Saucedo now has a total time of 25 hours, 29 minutes and 8 seconds with two laps left.

"Kahit anong pilit niyang humabol, andiyan pa rin ako (No matter how hard he tried, I was still there)," Saucedo said.

Cossack Riders keep team lead

STA. ROSA, LAGUNA—COSSACK VODKA inched closer to the team championship of the Tour Philippines Tinubuan Padyak Pinoy after finishing a tested game plan to the letter in the ninth leg from Lucena to here.

Rodolfo Delgado Bokser and Michael Reyes finished 3-4 for the day and anchored a strong showing by Cossack, which timed a total of 15 hours, 50 minutes and 44.021 seconds.

Cossack boosted its overall lead to 9 minutes and 31.983 seconds over Team Elitk after Ishik Sakuwada, another rookie, brought up the rear of the first group which clocked 2 hours and 57.31 seconds for the 157.20-kilometer stage.

They could have put a fourth rider in the first group had it not been for a mechanical problem that slowed down skipper Renante Sambrano with just over four kilometers left.

Today's seventh lap, a Tagaytay-to-Tagay, tay grind spread over 145.4 kilometers, will serve as the final stage of the team event.

Tigers halt slide, roll back Kings

[illegible]
4:45 p.m.—San Miguel Beer vs Ginebra
7:30 p.m.—Talk 'N Text vs Sta. Lucia

By Jasmine W. Payo

THE UNCA-COLA TIGERS SHOWED SIGNERS for another breakdown.

But the Tigers regrouped just in time and witnessed the Ginebra Kings' furious rally for a 99-88 victory in the Coca Metrodeal Brands Hot Philippine Cup yesterday at the Araneta Coliseum.

Johnny Abarrientos scored six of his 11 points in the final two minutes as he took over from John Arigo, who pumped in 18 of his 21 points in the second half and played the biggest role in ending the Tigers' five-game losing streak.

"I'm just happy that our cue broke through with," said Tigers coach Bitoy Fortis. "More our loss to San Miguel, I said the team we were executing well. The energy was there, we just came short. My only concern was the team should not get frustrated."

It looked like the Tigers, whose record improved to 7-7, could do no wrong until the last six minutes.

Still trailing by 18 points, 89-71, the Kings came up with an 11-0 blitz that trimmed the deficit to seven, 89-82, with less than three minutes remaining.

Jaypee Belmonte cut the lead further to 91-86, before Abarrientos' free throws stopped the Ginebra rampage and gave the Tigers a 95-86 edge in the closing seconds.

The Tigers took the first half as 50-48 then went ahead by 10 points, 50-40, after opening the second half with an 8-0 spurt.

Clearly frustrated, Kings' top scorer Mark Caguioa was ejected early in the third quarter after throwing two technical fouls in a span of one minute.

The Kings dropped to 3-8 but are outright semifinal slot and slid to sixth place with a 6-7 slate.

Meanwhile, Purefoods team physician Dr. Buffy Bautista said injured forward Eugene Tejada is scheduled for another operation today to realign his damaged scaled cord.

The scores:

First Game

UNCA COLA 99—Arigo 21, Hamid 14, Pool 14, Miranda 12, Abarrientos 11, Antonio 8, Manuel 8, Wainwright 7, Asperon 2, Ignot 0.

GINEBRA 88—Belmonte 22, Caguioa 12, Buck 11, Reiger 9, Subdenga 4, Salvador 3, Suarez 2, Ferreria 2, Dado 2, Dimaunahan 2.

Quarters: 23-23, 50-48, 71-62, 88-88

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SUN CELLULAR

Iligan hands Bacchus 2nd straight loss

ILIGAN CITY—MAYOR LAWRENCE CRUZ'S ILIGAN Dimonites dealt Bacchus Marikina Shoemart Marikina the second straight loss with a commanding 101-79 victory Tuesday in the 2005 Lucenzo-Brandy NBC national basketball championship at the packed MSU-IIT gym here.

Last year's MVP Christian Mickey played his best game so far to lead the Steelly Lightning-backed Crusaders to their seventh win in 10 games with 25 points on an eye-popping 11-of-13 shooting plus 21 rebounds.

After shutting defending champion Lucenzo Cocoa in the first loss in the southern division, the Mandaluyong-based businessmen Allen Encarnacion and south Lawrence Chongson sputtered in the fourth quarter and ended their southern outing with their fourth defeat in 10 games.

Mickey scored 11 of his points in the payoff period, rallied with Chanda encounters a 19-61 deficit as well as many and several turbaned southern division leader Dimonites.

The scores:

ILIGAN 101—Mickey 25, Sangang'a 9, Abalos 14, Lo 6, Sabo 8, Ibanez 4, Dagat 4, Salcedo 2, Tapales 2, Bartolome 6, Tagamolila, Bagtas 5

BACCHUS MARIKINA 79—Ilo 17, Cruz 11, Abalos 11, Encarnacion 11, Bartolome 10, Jay Cabral 10, Dayondon 6, Philips 3, Reyes 2, Jay Lazaro 1, Sarmiento)

Quarters: 25-19, 51-40, 80-61, 101-79

REWARDING

NCAA names Jun B commissioner

DYNASTIC PROFESSIONALISM HAS DEFINITELY met its match in Jun Bernardino. A well-loved figure in the province of basketball administration of the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

The former Philippine basketball association commissioner was officially named during a joint meeting by the NCAA Policy Board and Management Committee yesterday at the St. Scholastica's in Manila.

Bernardino is no doubt the right man for the job as the NCAA celebrates its 82nd season in its host school by College of St. Benilde with his vast experience and knowledge in basketball, highlighted by his stint in Asia's developing sport here.

The former University of the Philippines Maroon was named PBA commissioner in 1990. He stepped down after the 2002 season due to chronic ailment.

"It is my pleasure to serve the NCAA for the 82nd season. Considering what basketball has given me now in terms of values I am sure I think it is [how] natural that I give back what I have received throughout the years," said Bernardino.

The NCAA men's basketball tournament starts June 28 on the Araneta Coliseum, with the Letran Knights defending their championship.

Also playing for the Maroons, Bernardino joined Dollar in 1979 as an assistant coach in Ray Ilgarde for over 10th seasons. When the club disbanded in 1983, he turned to broadcasting.

In July that year, Bernardino joined the league as committee secretary for more or less 6 seasons as senior commissioner—the youngest to be appointed at the age of 46.

Spinners try to take heat out of Sparks

By Jasmine W. Payo

IT TOOKED THE MAGNOLIA HYDRIDS HOUR TO RELEASE EVERY thing in the PBL Unity Cup.

Considered a shoo-in to the 8th series where they encountered the streaking quartet of Jeanette Wenas from the Shine, Mercy and Jo Bernardino, Sta.

"That is the hungry we have to overcome," said Reese.

Sparks coach Lonie Alas, however, feels the Spinners still always be tougher figure out.

Purefoods' Otis line only known Magnolia seen in 29 matches seen joining the league five years ago.

Meanwhile, the Jewels will be gunning for a sweep over Hapee-POS after winning their first encounter, 99-85, at Araneta Coliseum.

Kim Jones will be coming off a near perfect performance—shooting 7-of-9 from the field—to finish with 15 points against Toyota Otis last Saturday.

Hapee-POS dropped out of the quarterfinal race after absorbing its sixth straight loss versus Magnolia.

A PNP Special Action Force member pours water on the main pack of riders cycling along the national highway in Lucena City

NBC selections playing abroad

THE NATIONAL BASKETBALL CONFERENCE (NBC) has been invited to play in two international tournaments—one in Taiwan and the other in Thailand.

Rizal Live Production Association president Lito Tri-Club invited NBC, through president Ramon "Tats" Pauilla, to participate in the Rizal Live Production Basketball Championship on May 23-28 in Rizal Live, Taiwan.

The NBC-Selection has also been requested to defend its title in the Crown Prince's Cup tournament on June 26-July 2 in Hatyai, Songkhla, Thailand.

"We're honored to be invited to these two international events," said Pauilla. "We'll definitely do our best to bring honors to the country."

The NBC board has decided to send a selection of the best players in the members division to play in Taiwan. The best cagers in the southern division will carry NBC's colors in Thailand.

"We're looking forward to show our Asian neighbors that we're still a power to reckon with in the region," said NBC executive vice president and Tagaytay City Mayor Bernard Tolentino.

STAGE 6 RESULTS

Individual

1 S. Ochoa (Rizal, 3:57.5)
2 M. Lozada (Bat Kalbay, same time

3 S. Bahon (Cavanan Valley, same time
4 M. Dayo (Cavanan Valley, same time
5 R. Sapno (PAT), same time
6 A. Mangaba (Tanduli), same time
7 J. Gutierrez (Rizal), same time
8 A. Gutierrez (PAT), same time
9 J. Pacaldo (Bat Kalbay), same time
10 S. Sarmiento (Tanduli), same time

11 S. Olivia (Bat Kalbay), same time
12 A. Pandoy (Iraq), same time
13 J. Martinez (Tanduli), same time
14 J. Santiago (Cavanan Valley), same time
15 P. Salina (Cavanan Valley), 1:08.0

Overall individual

1 S. Bahon (Cavanan Valley), 20:00.00
2 F. Sarmiento (Tanduli), 20:00.00

3 S. Ochoa (Rizal), 20:00.00
4 J. Gutierrez (Cavanan Valley), 20:07.00
5 J. Martinez (Tanduli), 20:10.00
6 A. Gutierrez (Cavanan Valley), 20:12.00
7 M. Lozada (Bat Kalbay), 20:42.00
8 A. Mangaba (Tanduli), 20:45.00
9 J. Santiago (Cavanan Valley), 20:48.00
10 A. Lorenzo (Iraq), 20:50.00

Santy nears Tour title

From page A-11

Hinon, who relied the opening stage from Quezon City to Calamundan on Friday, started in third, 7 minutes and 13 seconds behind, followed by rookie Irish Valenzuela and Tomas Martinez who trailed by 8:42 and 13:54, respectively.

It seems that the only thing that can prevent Santacruz from winning the Tour is a major accident or equipment malfunction because the surge today does not offer that he had a challenge to the field.

The "Hungary Road" to Unisan, Quezon, is just a 9-km stretch of road with a 40-degree incline, that all things being equal, Santacruz's 4 UP lead seems unstoppable.

Alvarez Donnalyn, reigned in women's open, still 12:24 behind Santacruz and 18 seconds off the main pelaton Ronnie Sandoval.

Rookie Harvey Sioson, third after the first two stages, moved at eighth spot, 13:06 adrift, with Arnold Quintanilla, the 2003 champ within the first ten seconds, and Reinhard Gotamco rounding out the Top 10.

1 S. Ochoa (Rizal), 20:30.00
2 J. Santacruz (Cavanan Valley), 20:42.00
3 T. Martinez (Bat Kalbay), 20:48.00
4 A. Gutierrez (Cavanan Valley), 20:52.00
5 M. Lozada (Bat Kalbay), 20:52.00
6 A. Mangaba (Tanduli), 20:54.00
7 J. Santiago (Cavanan Valley), 20:56.00
8 F. Sarmiento (Tanduli), 20:58.00
9 A. Lorenzo (PAT), 21:02.00
10 A. Gutierrez (PAT), 21:04.00

Cebu-dribblers down Mantawi

CEBU TODAY
(Mandaue City Cultural and Sports Complex)
5:30 p.m. — Mandaue vs. Isabel Laguindingan Dolphins

TEXERS CITY—HOST CEBU LIGHTMANIA Toledo smashed the visiting Mantawi Traders, 76-62, to begin the Mayor Division Semifinal Round of the KE Kenwa Pedalo Mindanao Visayas Basketball Association (MVBA) First Conference at the Mandaue Cultural and Sports Complex Tuesday night.

Guard Alex Cadiglet connected on back-to-back triples in the first quarter to give the Lightmanians control of the game. Joe Sobrevino and Coach Jun Ilao then led the group, 6-0, from there it was an all-Lightmanians show as center Jack Mangubat and power forward Ronald Norman combined for 19 points in the second quarter to peg the halftime score at 43-31.

Mantawi top gun Clemente Minanio scored 21 points, all in the second half, Randy Sevilla added 12 and guard Hugo Cabo fetched the Traders of Mayor Thelma Duarte.

ENGLAND's Tina Watson (third from left) takes part in a fitness test with teammates during an England squad's pre-World Cup soccer training session at Vale Do Lobo, Algarve, Portugal.

Adamson too powerful for UE spikers

By Marc Anthony Reyes

ADAMSON ENGAGED THE FULL SECTOR OF its volleyball power against hapless University of the East, 25-20, 25-9, 25-19, and eight to improve the record it will carry into the next round of the Shakey's V-League at the Rizal Eagle Gym.

Already in the semifinals and battling a winless foe, the Lady Falcons relaxed their punches and pounded the Lady Warriors mercilessly to post their fifth victory six games.

The Lady Falconers , who fell to 0-6, never gave their foes the chance to pile up points in the latter part of the first and third sets when the Lady Falcons experimented with new combinations.

National team mainstay Cherry Rose Macaraeg led Adamson's attack as expected, scoring 14 outright winners to finish with 20 points while Nene Jane Sagubio added eight kills out of her 16 points.

But the Lady Falcons got a big scare when power Sheena Lou Adajar had her elbow while diving for a save and colliding with team captain Kristine Ann Dave in the second set. She limped her eight elbow in the process.

Adamson coach Shirley Pamo said the injury was "nothing serious" and that the 5-foot defensive specialist would be ready to play in the next seven seven which starts next week.

Rubie de Leon, one of the Adamson point players, contributed 11 points, including two blocks to cap Macaraeg's 20 at net. The 5-foot-11 Macaraeg finished with three blocks.

QCHS, St. Joseph bets gain q'finals

QUEZON CITY HIGH SCHOOL BALLED to beat University of Perpetual Laguna, 7-25, 25-20, 25-21, in the Shakey's Girls basketball intramural League at the Ateneo Blue Eagle Gym.

Fresh from the recent Hapee Habering Pambansa, the trio of Wacky Rose Cabanag, Charlie Quemada and Mikaela Morales combined for 16 kills and 4 blocks as against 12 kills and 4 blocks by Jennelyn Belen, Jessica Ornico and Sarah Jane Gonzales of UPVL.

With the win, QCHS is now solo leader in Bracket B with a 3-0 slate and is assured of a berth in the quarterfinals.

In other matches, St. Joseph College beat UP Integrated School in straight sets 26-17, 25-8. Dilman Preparatory School dealt Jesus Heart Institute its second loss 25-17, 25-13.

University of Perpetual Help System defeated Jesus Christian Schools 25-11, 21-25, 25-17.

In Bracket D, University of the East, the reigning UAAP junior division champion, is likewise assured of a berth with a 4-0 slate having won its match against Mapua Institute 25-13, 25-5.

Hope Christian School hopes to win on Thursday when they play Pennsa Bay-7 High School in twenty Bracket B miss-0 to quarter finals.

The Shakey's Girls Volleyball Intramural League is supported by Bonkis District, Tokyo Sports, Milana, the Official Volleyball, Asics and Isi Philippines.

Six matches are scheduled tomorrow at the Ateneo gym.

Parica keeps clean record

PARICA

OLIMPIO VOTER at the "Young" Dubs tipped Ateneo Blue Omis, 11-11, yesterday to put his final straight victory and remain undefeated in the 2005 Singaporeans Volleyball Championship at the Makati Coliseum's Dubs Lounge, Nevada.

Votes, who led the Filipino-British team-mates in the UK in the mid-80s, earlier reviewed Americans Nick Nemet, 11-8, and Canadian Pin Zi Lin Sidney, 11-8.

He will now face former world champion Johnny Archer of the US.

Earlier, Rodolfo "Boy Sinimol" Luat suffered his first loss in the hands of ex-UK player Efren Atienza-Capoy Cruz, 11-7, to join fellow Filipino James Sandiapan in the loser's bracket.

Sandiapan beat Joey Kerbak, 11-7, but lamented to Nicolas Guimond, 11-5, in the second round. He will face David Salijk in the loser's circle.

Above "Boss" Reyes and Lennon "Lantgun" Oncada are battling each other in the third round.

Marlon Bernardino

BAFFLE WINNER: Rado Cuffee (#52) top of the line-watch, the F 16C, which was won by Ryan Cruz (center) during the recent Bid Show-16. With Cruz are Archie Lucero and Mark Wesli sports and games deals Pablo Bones.

Long shots Yee, Villa gain NTCC semis slots

EDMUND Yee: Sanguine survivor

KATHLEEN Uy

By Jong Arcasas

SAN JUAN, METRO MANILA—TREY CRAMMER for practice together as the four Eagle Ridge courses Boy Sarabia knew aside from their lack of knowledge of the terrain, Edmund Yee and Edith Villa felt they were not old to have a chance against the young stars in the National Team Championship of Club Champions here.

Three days into the tournament presented by Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp and Sequence Golf, most of the tourney seeds are into the two final-round spots in their late 40s are still very much alive.

Southwoods Int'l Yee, winner of a six-time Interior Insulation, and Valley's Villa, who open-

ners a one-of-a-kind victory here, posted 1 up victories against separate rivals yesterday to reach the semifinals at the Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club.

After creating young Mike Tee of Riviera in the round of 16, Villa enhanced his giant-killing by eliminating top-seed Ibeya Reyes of Manila Golf while the co-assistant for country of Indian Bankers of Alabang in pulverizing numbers.

In today's Final Four, Yee faces Ang Soo Park, the man who fired him to a duel for the Eastridge title, and Villa squares off with Bonifacio Jesus of Tagaytay Highlands Park defeated Lea Cusip Tambuyong of Eagle Ridge, 2&1, and de Jesus squeaked past Olivier Ilan of Tagaytay Midlands, 1 up.

In his ladies division, junior player Cyan Rodriguez of Riviera and Vanna Te find mental cause to go expected showdown for the crown by ripping their opponents.

Rodriguez, 14, clipped Mimi Legaspi, 483, to forge a semis duel with Dolly Godfrey-Ilan Yee, 15, was overdone in a 4&3 scrapper of Brielle Ayson (Southwoods-Tagaytay Midlands).

Godfrey, who represents Sta. Elena and Alabang, covered a 2&1 decision over Ilduara Sabino to re-unite another trip in the semis. Sweet ladies Kathleen Uy, a 1&1 winner over Lyn Mangalindan.

Regulars of the NTCC are Sta. Lucia Realty Golfway as the official apparel. Invite the official vehicle, Tiburon the official ball, PAL the official carrier, Citem Bagel, The Travel Club and the like the Manila. Hotel was the first local to consolidated golf tour, it looks to once sponsor

Park, Gabasa lead winners

JONG KOO PARK OF EASTRIDGE HIS played brute strength and 13-year-old Miss Gabasa looked a long 40-foot putt to lead the winners in the hotly Skills Challenge of the National Tournament of Club Champions at the Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club.

The lanky Park, one of a dozen business executives, hit a 3-10-yard drive to rule the longest drive competition while pint-sized Gabasa, representing Alta Vista, won the putting contest.

Edmund Yee of Manila Southwoods, Rodel Mangaldonan and Tourney de Jesus took the rest, in swoop in the men's division while Violet Cojuangco, Mimi Tuason and Lourdes Leppold were the other prize-winners in the distaff side.

Yee topped the hardest competition, Dr. Jesus the pitching contest and Mangaldonan the putting event.

Godfrey came closest to the pin while Legaspi hit the best fairway shot. Winners received P5,000 worth of gift certificates and boxes golf balls.

Echavez surges to 3-stroke lead

PAULIE JAMIEZ RODE ON A FIERY START TO fire a solid three-under par 69 yesterday and surge ahead by three strokes over Jun Bernie Salvador through the first round of the Invitational Point and Country Club in Lipa, Batangas yesterday.

Echavez, one of the recipients of the Montreal Cauldron Open program, finished Hole 8, 9 and 9 to make several three holds on to his head with a two-birdie, two-bogey nine at the back for a 69.

Counting his even par round on the first day, the 17-year-old Echavez bests Jun pointed a 36-hole total of 141 going into the final two rounds of this event carrying as the second leg of a five-stage series hosted by Tanauan.

Bernie notched his seventh par one-over land in two with a birdie on Hole 12, but Dan Tabuena bet couldn't match Echavez's run.

Gary Zulet moved one step up to No. 3 with a 74 but fell behind by seven with a 146 while last year champion Rex Chong Mei could a 77 for the Rotzak Tournament, who fired a one-under par 71, at 149.

FH Invt'l starts today

MORE THAN A DOZEN TOP AMATEURS FROM the Philippines and Asia will be in action during the Federal Hills Golf Club will again host the annual four-day tournament co-presented by Asahiya Inc. and Wilson Sports together with major sponsors New Life Center and Football Net Bull, announced the Federal Hills executive said this morning. Competitions for the coveted trophy and cash prizes will be decided in the stroke play format.

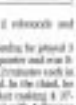
Aside from the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong and Singapore, Japan and Thailand are also expected to send their representatives to the tournament.

Defending champion Jojo Rodriguez of Riviera and Vanna Te find mental cause to go expected showdown for the crown by ripping their opponents.

Live, and in color, the horror that was Tejada

IN HIS FOURTH SEASON IN THE PBA, Eugene Tejada suffers the horror of a career-ending injury his neck and eventually spilled vomit. Live, and in color.

SPECTATOR



M. S. Hinayagan

At Makati Med where Tejada is now fitted, doctors say he'll eventually need a surgery. It can recover, so hopefully versus him in his original, healthy self.

What happened to both Tejada's career and Ed Zobel, who while found for years before they died due to spinal injuries after falling off horses, sounds the same.

Please say a prayer for the Fil-Am, whose basketball career should be of interest especially fan—it is danger of having an abrupt end.

By from visiting 30, Tejada's too young to lose consciousness.

One "Our Father" for Tejada, please?

I recently suffered a stroke but eventually learned "normal day to pray" Not from basketball, though, but from writing too much.

Who said nothing lost has anything to one's health?

In my case, I once and AIBA showed my 1 2-0-5 triumphed, the result of my not-so-healthy lifestyle. Eating, from Hospital's Dr. Antonio Mc. G. Cabanos and Captain Dr. Edilbe A. Bunoy, best agreed on putting me to a multiple-session, four-week therapy rehab at Capitol under expert Dr. Rhoea Bonifacio and Jude Fernandez.

Thank God, two more rebirths and I'm done.

Golf, here I come.

Tejada was playing his 79th PBA game when he lost his rebound because now left buttocks first.

That was last Dec. 29. After 14, other Purefoods, Tejada's third PBA team in three years after Alaska 2000-2004 and Ina Migzat four 2005, completing Red Bull.

Sunday's game made him accumulate several of 1995 minutes, the last 9:04 which saw him score 2 points on 1-of-2 shooting, start 1 rebounds and block one shot.

This particular Sunday he played 3 minutes in the first quarter and was 0-for-1 from the field, 2 minutes each in the second and third. In the third, he was 1-of-1—his basket making it 37-37, Purefoods behind with 4:21 gone in the period.

Barely two minutes after coach Ryan Gregorio ordered Tejada in the bench, Tejada would suffer the tragedy that shocks the league in 2003 and it should not be another one anytime soon: the Fil-Am's battle in 2003.

Playing in his 12th game in the 12th month for Purefoods in the conference, Tejada would soon sink it in the game he's spent by and never played in.

On 3 happened with the score pegged at 73-54, Red Bull put, 5-0 left in the game.

You are about by 1:0 points with under 6 minutes left, who would die playing by a solo?

Tejada, it'd be.

Coach Roger Yap had missed on a lay-up. Tejada went for the rebound, caught some skin of Yap and he fainted.

In a split second, the hardwiring Mark Brunner of Red Bull, all of 6-foot-10, 260-lb. Brazil, 6-foot-9-2/2, to flip on Tejada, then quickly up.

When he fell vomit, Tejada said he had—oh!—a weak brain body.

Soon, he'd be writing to pain.

Soon, he'd be nausea.

Soon, he'd find his pal friend, the veteran Jessy Bernardino, consoling him to ever—with ABC/Fr. Fal Secondary Hero four by.

As he lay there mainly from some threat, it was memories. Kerby Raymundo, told his friend.

Other testimonies, team officials and doctors from both friend and enemy camps hovered around him.

Nobody would touch him as thoughts had the hideous plague.

Because Gilbert Arenas wasn't around, and no smoothly ambulance to dark residence of league contracts. It takes his on the floor for nearly 8 minutes—helpless as a cat hit by a hit and run motor.

It is his prior bowed had died this day, or he may sustained of Tejada suffering the fall, the poor kid would have died from loss of blood.

Scott, Antipolo's Nestor Gomez, owner of the accident, was almost as bare more from Mabuti Med?

Gomez, a businessman, senses were there for Dimaculangan?

"Labo" had swept them off to the South China Sea?

Brian Heeks would later from jaded wearing the Lifeline device supposedly to bring the disinclined motorist being informed on load Tejada accurate to the invisible ambulance.

If Commissioner Rita is still sleeping his tension right now to shoot down Lifeline, I recommend instead an Ah-49 Apache Deadline.

What will happen now to Tejada, born in Cebu City—and who turns 26 on Sept. 14, not even his father Emilio, a former basketball player himself from Nasugbu, Batangas, would know. Not his mother, Angelica, a nurse from Batangas, Batangas.

Tejada's Dad and Mom have settled from the United States where they've been living for decades—the last four years for him, their son.

In times like this, prayer, light a candle for the art of coming with majesty —if you don't mind.

Comments to mvega@philstar.com

SPORTSWATCH

World Cup tour

THE "SPORTING CAPITAL OF ASIA" IS ALL SET TO WELCOME THE CREME DE LA CREME OF THE WORLD'S BEST SOCCER PLAYERS AS THE PHILIPPINE FOOTBALL FEDERATION (PFF) AND THE PHILIPPINE SOCCER CLUB (PSC) JOIN HANDS TO BRING THE 2002 FIFA WORLD CUP TO THE PHILIPPINES.

The PFF and PSC will host the 2002 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers on June 23 at the Rizal Memorial Stadium. The PFF and PSC will also host the 2002 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers on June 24 at the Rizal Memorial Stadium.

PCBC summer fun run

THE PASIG CITY MARATHON (10.5 KILOMETERS), 7th PCBC 5K and 10K summer fun run on Sunday with 3,000 runners expected to participate. Starting at 6 a.m. from the PCBC Building in Pasig, the 10K run will start at 6:30 a.m. and the 5K run at 7 a.m. The 10K run will be held at the Rizal Memorial Stadium. The 5K run will be held at the Rizal Memorial Stadium. The 10K run will be held at the Rizal Memorial Stadium.

Pisa Maritime Golf

THE PISA MARITIME GOLF TOURNAMENT WILL BE HELD ON SUNDAY, MAY 13, AT THE PISA MARITIME GOLF COURSE. THE TOURNAMENT WILL BE HELD ON SUNDAY, MAY 13, AT THE PISA MARITIME GOLF COURSE. THE TOURNAMENT WILL BE HELD ON SUNDAY, MAY 13, AT THE PISA MARITIME GOLF COURSE.

Drag racing Saturday

THE SEVENTH LEG OF THE SECOND SEASON OF THE PHILIPPINE DRAG RACING CHAMPIONSHIP WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY, MAY 12, AT

SPORTS

Wade steal seals Heat victory

Miami shows New Jersey the door, advances to East finals

IN THE game's defining moments, Miami's Dwyane Wade (left) runs the ball away from New Jersey's Vince Carter to seal the Heat's victory over the Nets in Game 5 of their Eastern Conference semifinals series at the American Airlines Arena in Miami, Florida, on Wednesday (Thursday in Manila). AFP

MIAMI—DWYANE WADE intercepted a pass for Vince Carter as time expired, and Miami held on for a 106-105 win over New Jersey and reached the National Basketball Association semifinals for the second straight year.

Antoine Walker scored 21 points and Wade overcame a slow start to add 21 for the second-seeded Heat on Tuesday, who eliminated the third-seeded Nets in five games and await the winner of the Detroit-Cleveland series.

Walker and backup center Alonzo Mourning pulled up the dark 1st Multi and Shaquille O'Neal, who again was limited by foot trouble and scored 17 points.

"We are back and playing at a high level," O'Neal said. "Our 3 men are playing well. In the next round we just want to play wherever is the best time."

A year ago, Miami lost in seven games in Detroit as Wade tried to play through a painful rib injury.

Wade has taken some terrific tumbles in this year's playoffs but the supreme guard is relatively healthy and will host at least a week off before the next series.

"We get to rest a little but then bring it on," Wade said. "It's a nice feeling knowing you're the first team On the second and ten-match everyone else trying to get in."

After winning a double-digit first-half deficit, the Heat never trailed in the fourth quarter, taking the lead for good at 99-98 on a breakaway dunk by Wade with 4:57 to play.

He made six of 10 shots in the second half after a 0-of-6 first start.

Jason Williams scored 12 points, Mourning added 11 and Gary Payton, 35 for the Heat, who shot 56 percent (40-of-71) to overcome 15-of-39 foul-shooting.

Jefferson also scored 31 points, Jason Kidd added 20 and Lamond Murray 14 for the Nets, who shot 514 percent (46-of-74).

New Jersey lost the third four games after winning game one in Miami.

Behind Carter, the Nets jumped to a 23-24 lead and to 38-27 on a jumper by Kidd with 10:13 left in the second.

"We attacked the basket and went opposite," Jefferson said. "We're going home," Carter said. AFP

Alijah Bell (right) shoots the game-tying 3-pointer to overtime over Daniel Ewing. AFP

Suns outlast Clippers in 2 OT, take 3-2 lead

PHOENIX, ARIZONA—SHAWN MARION scored six of his 36 points in the second overtime as Phoenix outlasted the Los Angeles Clippers, 120-115, on Tuesday to take a 3-2 lead in their quarterfinal series.

Game one, bashed and hung in three pulled-out runs," Marion said. "It is all about pain."

In yet another thrilling overtime postseason game, the second-seeded Suns moved within one win of a return trip to the National Basketball Association's penultimate round.

They blew a 19-point second-half lead and were rescued by Raja Bell, who drained a tying three-pointer with 1.1 seconds to play in the first overtime.

"It was good play call," Bell said. "I thought if I got open I was going to make it. I wasn't ready to go home yet.

"This has been our character all year. If someone makes a mistake we don't point fingers."

Matched up against the bigger Elton Brand for most of the game, Marion did most of the work inside for the Suns.

He made 14-of-23 shots and helped Phoenix fight on the backboards and with most players sweating exhaustion in the second overtime, Marion still had a reserve of energy.

He opened the period with two free throws —Phoenix's first made foul shots since the second quarter—and added a flying follow dunk to give the Suns the lead for good at 113-113 with 3:20 remaining.

Marion appeared to hurt his ankle on the play but returned shortly thereafter after a three-point play by Brand pulled the Clippers within 119-118 with 1:22 to go. Marion took a silly pass from Canada's Steve Nash and made a running hook shot on the 7:101 mark.

The sixth-seeded Clippers were scored again as Leandro Barbosa and Nash each made two foul shots to seal it.

With game six in Los Angeles on Thursday, Los Angeles was one stop from going home with a 3-2 lead after a fastmove by Nash led to two free throws by Sam Cassell that opened a 111-108 lead with 3.6 seconds left in OT.

The Thomas scored 25 points, Bell added 22 and Nash 17 and 13 assists for the Suns, who shot 46 percent (40-of-167), including 13-of-35 from the arc.

Brand had 33 points, 10 rebounds and five blocks and Cassell scored 32 points for the Clippers, who shot 43 percent (32-of-101). AFP

KARATE OPEN

National team standouts shine

DAGUPAN CITY—NATIONAL TEAM members Bienvenido Cruz, Mae Ilao and Ichiro Fortin stamped their class in their respective events as the medal rush for the National Capital Region's pioneering delegation to the PR Inter-Zone Championships here.

Cruz, of FEKA Gagayma de Oro, bagged the gold in the -63 kg, super-lightweight category by beating Rolando Layman of NEA MOR in the finals round.

Ilao, of ISKO Marikina Valley, the -55 kg, women's lightweight event against Angelica Indiano in the finals while Philippine Army standout Serbio topped the -60 kg, men's lightweight class after beating Gilbuano kamoka Jiro Bendoy.

Other winners in the tournament organized by Philippine Karate Federation (PKF) Region III director Ernesto Tuzzy were Nilo Hanna (-55 kg, men's lightweight), Aileen Aquino (-48 kg, women's lightweight), Jahmar Saad (-50 kg, women's super-lightweight) and Xiny Llanes (women's open weight category).

Southeast Asian Games bronze medalist Cheryl Tagaday was the most decorated karateka in the two-day meet with 3 gold, 1 silver at 2 bronze.

The 26-year-old Tagaday, who won a bronze alongside Gretchen Malalad in the 2002 Busan Asian Games, placed third behind Llanes and Aiden Pangoga in the women's open weight event. She also emerged as the champion in the -48 kg, beaten sweet while placing second in the individual kumite.

"I'm happy about the results of the meet because all members of the team qualified. But again, thanks to the training of our coach, David Lee," said Malalad, who is already headed to the national team, along with kumite Marcus Melchor and Nelson Mendoza.

MALALAD: Scored

"We also found new potentials who could further strengthen the national karate team and we will prepare very hard for the world karate federation championships and the Asian Games," added Malalad.

Teener Uy produces perfection

JARED MARTIN UY, 13, SCORED A PERFECT game recently at the recently finales of the Luzon tournament of the Sta. Lucia East Bowling Association (Stabia) at the Sta. Lucia East Bowling Center in Cainta, Rizal.

This was Uy's first perfect game since he took up bowling two and a half years ago, a right-hander. Uy used a 15-pound Pete Parrico.

"I was so surprised when [my scoring] was announced," Uy said. "I felt my hands trembling and cold because all eyes were on me. I turned to my coach and mentor, Mr. Abe Tan, who told me: 'Huwag mo nang patawarin yan. Dun't let it go.'"

He took his position and calmly released the ball which rolled right into the pocket for the 300 score.

Uy, an incoming junior at the Lourdes School of Mandaluyong, is a member of the Blacks "Raining 3-Uts," a group of young bowlers being trained by Tan and Boy Rosenales. Raining 3-Uts has dotted a bowling fellowship on Team 12 at the Sta. Lucia Bowling Center, with cash prizes at stake.

The 6-foot-2 Junior also plays basketball when not bowling. He said he bowls only once a week when there's classes, and practices four times a week during the summer break.

Lawyer-engineer Mr. Jared credit to his father, Jimmy Uy, a businessman and himself a good bowler, mom Marilou, coach Tan and Boy Rosenales, his "classmates" and friends in Raining 3-Uts and Blacks for their support.

ENTERTAINMENT

Wrong way to 'discover' new child star

EVERY YEAR, OUR TV CHANnels hold competitions for child performers—singers, actors, dancers, hosts, models, or all of the above. That's all to the good, because local show business needs new infusions of young talent to help keep our shows fresh and vital.

In many instances, however, TV tilts for child talents are characterized by a wrong-headed approach to "discovering" the juvenile stars of tomorrow.

Instead of focusing on real talent and stellar charisma, they stress gimmicks, gimmicks, and more gimmicks, with mixed results.

This is a good gig, because Filipino children are exceptionally talented and gifted talents—before their stage parents and the TV demands wreak their worst on them.

Why do they do this? Because they believe that local viewers think kids who act like little adults are cute and smart. And because TV people go for program elements that can be depended on to attract fly quickly the audience, and "cute" kids, no matter how artificial, are thought to be capable sure to do this.

It's understandable, but it's a poor use of our young resources. It does violence to the developmental "needs" of children, for the most part. (Who's a pint or two, the cute kid of the moment has become so predictable that he's quickly replaced with another juvenile "talent," ad nauseam.

The approach is truly wrong-headed, because local show biz history scrupulously recalls and debunks it.

Think of the best child stars in past decades, like Mary Mahlitch and Alex Sigueiros, and you will realize that they became young superstars precisely because they weren't parroting adults' moves to grown-ups and pantomime, but were in fact original talents who were true to themselves and refused to do what everybody else was doing.

As a result, they stood out, and outlived most of their contemporaries as child stars, because they were genuinely smart and idiosyncratic, and learned to talk a blue streak.

If this is the way it should be, shouldn't other child talent-show aspire to reach that level? But as even we, schlepwood stage parents and show-biz TV people don't know the meaning of creativity and determination to it. So, most young tal-

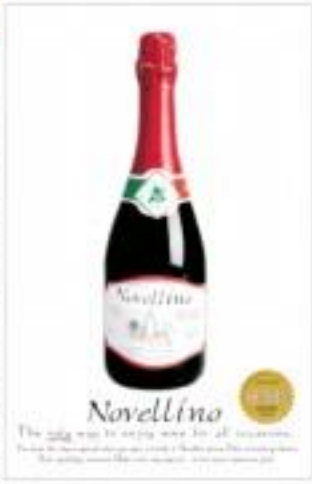
In spite of so many kiddie talent tilts, why we don't have a major child star today? The fault is in the brutes who mishandle them

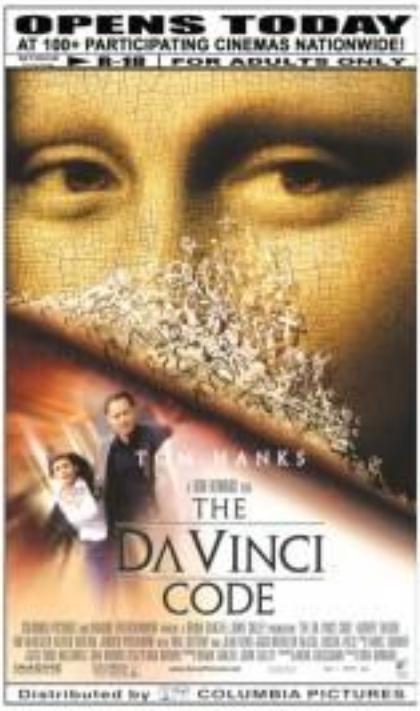
ents are compromised much too early in the game, before they are really ready.

It is any wonder, therefore, that years after so many kiddie talent tilts, we don't have a major child star today?

The fault, dear readers, isn't in our child talents, but in the brutes who mishandle them, and thus pre-

WRONG ALL





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8 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3
9 POSEIDON
10 AQUAMARINE

ERMITA

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6 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3

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7:25 ALASKA vs GINEBRA

What is 'pech

But can romance solve all problems? Counselor doesn't think so

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

WHAT'S "PECHANGA"

That's the term for "lacing

Lauren Dyogi, director of

expressed alarm over the n

him (unknowingly) dynam

Dyogi said. "He don't want t

According to "Pinoy Big Br

Randy Delfina, employed w

they'd focus more on friend

and a good foundation for co

Delfina corrected the imp

Pagsanjan—hosted on Sund

along with Joaquí Mendoza

house to join his roommate

housemate Nilla Jose. "She

me," Delfina told Inquirer.

review. "Feel ni'[illegible] to

Meanwhile, there's a feud

from each Ryan Mendoza.

Some problems can't be so

Amelita Ortega, Delfina's

if she misses her 11 month

ready to be reminded of her

her family—to help them fin

Speaking of family, Delfi

driven to housemate who

"You may miss your family

cause they are you as inspira

Battle of sexes?

Meanwhile, there seems t

the non-famous house on M

The boys suffered two lo

were booted; Clan Cabigti

eviction, were saved by fell

On air, Mikee Lee and Ma

says PBB is being disguised

Dave still feels intimidate

Joaquí," Delfina said. "The

the girls always thought he w

He said Fred, Joaquí, Da

prepared for the onset.

"They know they were bei

elsewhere," Delfina said. "I ad

to protect. If they were evicte

to ensure the same."

On Saturday, two more

house, included in the nomin

day were Hint, Mikee and Ol

The remaining housemate

for their regular nominating

decided on several issues.

Delfina received clue fro

two weeks ago had "connecti

outside" and carried violation

Roun

'Poseidon': Bette

LOS ANGELES—IT WAS BOT

at the cruise-ship disaster mo

Impossible III" from a second

list, according to studio estim

"Mission: Impossible III"

million) take-leading its nea

weekend that saw the Tom C

cent from its opening weeke

Internationally, "Mission:

other $107.2 million) to bring t

at $214 million (165.71 milli

"Poseidon," which reporte

make, debuted in second pl

in a solid weekend opening

Estimated ticket sales for

and Canadian theaters, acco

official is unless.

"Mission: Impossible III"

$28,300, 3) "[illegible]" $9,000, 4)

American Haunting," $5,750

"Stick It," $3,200, 9) "Ice Ag

"Silent Hill," $2,200, 30) "Fa

New 'Prison Brea

DALLAS—Fox is bringing it

Break" to the Shotgiller. Th

day said it will begin filmi

show on June 13 in the Dalla

"Prison Break," which ove

meant for new drama and c

follow. Michael Scofield, a

Wentworth Miller, who gets

out his brother Lincoln Burr

was framed for murder.

The rumors escaped over

which was shot around Cha

has a home in Dallas and rai

wide variety of settings arou

Wrong way

From page A2-1

sex line from rising into

and appealing young men.

Feedback

From Angela A. Silay of C

"Da Vinci Code" movie should

It is an insult on the divinity

Church itself. If the movie is

never greater severity and ca

be even more disturbing tha

open an even powerful that w

"Cars"

John Lasseter's latest fil

long hours, the animated mul

hit of the "Toy Story" movies

sunglass-wearer on "Car gotta ha

"Cars" is an [illegible] wor

featuring the voice of Owen [illegible]

lonbor robin race car to st

dough his ribbon family

stranded in a dooryeown, sm

inquiet and reassuring life

ayan' in Big Brother's house?

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4. Poseidon
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Celebrate Jumpin' Jam
Jumpin' Jam

WHAT'S INSIDE

Meralco gets CPCNs for 11 Metro cities, municipalities

RP expects upgrade in rating to 'positive'

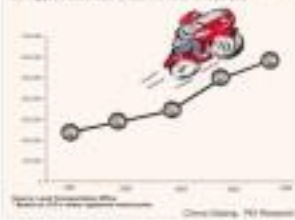
BUSINESS

Editor Raul D. Morales • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Narisma

Gov't orders audit of tax credit certificates

INQUIRER MONITOR

Demand for motorcycles grows * (2001-2005)



BIR blames increased use of TCCs for shortfall

By Michaelle V. Rivera

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE HAS ORDERED AN AUDIT OF the volume of tax credit certificates (TCCs) issued by the government and the validity of credits claimed by businesses.

The move was prompted by reports that the Bureau of Internal Revenue's huge tax collection shortfall in April was partly due to the substantial increase in the use of TCCs by corporate taxpayers.

"We need to know the stock of certificates floating and how risk is allocated among taxpayers. We have to improve our database and monitoring system," Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said in a briefing yesterday.

The BIR earlier reported that it collected only P71.3 billion in taxes in April, thus falling short of its P75.6-billion target for the month. The revenue agency said its collection efforts were dampened by the decline in cash remittances of income taxes as many companies used TCCs to settle part of their obligations.

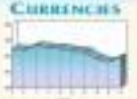
Income tax collection by the BIR stood at only P48.8 billion, or 35 percent short of the P57.2-billion target.

Teves said he has directed concerned agencies like the BIR to make an inventory of all TCCs issued in the past to substantiate claims of an increase in tax credit claims. He added that an inventory would give each entity a full grasp of how much tax credits should really be recognized by the government.

The BIR has also suggested putting a expir

GOV'T ORDERS AU

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 53.00 = $1

as of 5 p.m. /Sep 17, 2004

109.17 = ¥1

as of 5 p.m. /Sep 17, 2004

GOLD: $383.70/t.oz.

per comex, Hong Kong, May 17, 2004

STOCK MARKET

Shares close higher

SHARE PRICES CLOSED [illegible] PER-cent higher yesterday, apparently on a three-day rise in the bellwi[illegible] Inc. Spirit when fundamental confidence in the country's fiscal position, traders said.

Market watchers, however, are relatively muted because investors have already factored in the positive data and remained wary after recent heavy losses in the region, they said.

The composite index rose up 7.19 points, or 2.46% to 2,401.57 after trading between 2,406.86 and 2,479.92. Volume reached 3.17 billion shares worth P1.16 billion.

SHARES AS

Microsoft bullish on RP, to open Cebu office

By Abigail L. Ho

CONTINUING TO POST STRONG GROWTH in the Philippine market, software giant Microsoft Corp. will be opening a Cebu office to focus on its operations there shortly.

The firm's Cebu office would initially have 10-12 employees, Microsoft Philippines managing director Antonio Javier said.

It would be headed by Bhagwanjee Tilwani, previously Microsoft Philippines' chief finan-

MICROSOFT BU

Gov't privatization chief quits

THE KEY PERSON OVERSEEING THE sale of state-owned assets yesterday tendered his irrevocable and immediate resignation.

Jose A.R. Bengzon III, the government's chief privatization officer, yesterday said he resigned with the intention of going back to the private sector and with the belief that he had already served the purpose in the Privatization Management Office (PMO).

Bengzon, who worked in the banking industry for 25 years, said he wanted to work as a mutual fund or securities fund manager, believed to be a much lucrative job than his position (that is) in the PMO.

He resigned for the same reason as his sales department of think of the Philippine Islands (BPI) for nine years until 2004.

Bengzon said he believed he already helped (with) the needed revenues for the PMO and that the government agency could make substantial progress in the privatization program with the reforms in place.

"So, reason out legacy I left behind was the creation of a master list of all the assets," he told the business in an interview. He said the PMO has gotten an audit report and inventory of all state-owned assets that the PMO could privatize, including their market value, thus making it easier for the government to go on with its privatization program.

He said he also maintained the conviction of committees for various state asset assets being privatized to further boost their chances of being sold.

Under his tenure, the biggest government asset sold was the shares to Philippine National Bank, which were sold to the Lucio Tan group for more than P8 billion. Of the amount, P2 billion went to the national government's

GOV'T SA

Meralco gets CPCNs for 11 Metro cities, municipalities

By Abigail L. Ho

THE ENERGY REGULATORY Commission has issued provisional Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCNs) to Manila Electric Co.'s 25-year provisional authority to provide electricity services in 11 cities and municipalities within its franchise area.

In an order dated March 23, the regulatory body gave Meralco certificates of public convenience and necessity (CPCNs) to provide services in Malabon, Manila, Pateros, Mandaluyong, Quezon City, Caloocan, Makati, Pasay, Las Piñas, Navotas and San Juan.

The CPCNs are valid for 25 years from the issuance of the provisional authority, or from June 28, 2003, to June 27, 2028.

These allow Meralco to construct, install, operate and maintain electric systems in the 11 Metro Manila cities and municipalities.

In handing down the CPCNs, the ERC considered certain indicators from 2002, including the number of power interruptions in the Meralco franchise area, the duration of these interruptions, as well as the distribution utility's investment commitments to improve its services.

According to Meralco documents, which it submitted to the ERC in its application for CPCNs, customers in its franchise area suffered an average of nine interruptions in 2002, with an average duration of 23 hours throughout the year.

Interruptions lasting less than five minutes accounted 2.1 times that year.

To improve the reliability and quality of its services, Meralco committed P801 million in investments for its three sectors for eight years starting 2003. This amount included the development and expansion of substations in the area.

It also invested or committed to invest P681 million in Pasay, P137.7 million in Mandaluyong, P13.8 million in Malabon, P481.5 million in Manila, P11.9 million in Caloocan, P110 million in Navotas, P116.6 million in Pateros, P166.6 million in Pasig, P860.6 million in Quezon City, P160.4 million in Las Piñas, P982.5 million in Makati, and P7.5 million in San Juan.

These investments are all considered for the upgrade and expansion of substations in those areas. Some have already been completed, while others are under the pipeline.

7-11 operator trims losses to P18.6M

By Elizabeth L. Sarabia

PHILIPPINE SEVEN CORP., the owner of the biggest convenience store network in the country, returned its net losses to P18.6 million in the January-to-March period due to improved revenues from marketing, franchising and interest on investments.

PSC operates the chain of 7-11 stores in the country.

In a financial report with the Philippine Stock Exchange, PSC said it lost income—down by a great deal from the P1.1 billion it posted in the same period last year.

The growth in revenues in the first quarter piled on compared with last year's first quarter growth of 11 percent. The decline was due to the lower growth in the number of operating stores in the first quarter.

Same-store sales—which refer to the sales growth of stores that are operational for at least one year—grew 2.8 percent in 2005.

Total revenues from merchandise sold in the first quarter was slightly higher at P3.09 billion from P3.06 billion in the same period last year.

The growth in revenues in the first quarter paled

C&P Homes posts 68% profit jump

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

HOUSING DEVELOPer C&P Homes Inc. said it posted a 68-percent jump in its first-quarter net income to P57 million for 1Q2 million a year ago due to lower costs.

In a disclosure filed with the Philippine Stock Exchange, C&P Homes said the profit growth was mainly due to the decline in interest expenses to P11 million from P21 million last year.

Its consulting income Shorter reduced costs and expenses to P203 million this year from P241 million last year, the company added.

However, net sales were flat at P222 million from last year's P227 million.

Interest income and miscellaneous income grew 7 percent due to an increase in collectibles from installment contracts, better collection efficiency and higher income from administrative fees related to financing.

C&P Homes recently raised its authorized capital stock to P5 billion from P3 billion. The new capital consists of 7 billion common shares with a par value of P1. The capital build-up forms part of the financing firm's capital and debt restructuring program.

It was also aimed at enticing creditors to convert a portion of their claims into equity.

C&P Homes said it was trying to restructure P330 million in floating rate notes. Although the basic terms of the restructuring have laid out, certain implementing details were still to be confirmed and finalized.

C&P Homes said a restructuring of creditors through the sale of real estate properties and certain assets. It has also entered into swapping deals and joint-venture arrangements with its bondholder partners to secure some operating requirements.

Shares . . .

Front page B1

The broader all-shares index was down 1.84 points or 1,326.82.

Advancers led decliners 53 to 40, with 45 stocks unchanged.

The government said the budget surplus grew to P17.6 billion in April from P13 billion in the same month last year, thanks to increased revenue collection and reduced expenses. (See story on Page B2.)

"Psychologically, the positive fiscal numbers have been ... in the market's performance," said Jerry Liu of Summit Securities.

Top-traded stocks Land advanced 50 centavos to P14.75 while its parent Ayala Corp. gained P12.50 to P432.50.

PLDT ended down P6.8 at P1,100. Its unit Pilcel gained 20 centavos to P4. AFP

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Agents get together to give kids new lease on life

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

Gift of Life grants free heart surgery to less fortunate children

JOHN PAYNE VILLAMISTAN looked so healthy as any other seven-year-old boy. But unlike his playmates, he tired easily and had difficulty breathing because he had problems with his heart.

But thanks to the "Gift of Life" program that financed his heart surgery, he now runs around and plays at school as his friends.

He is one of the growing number of poor Filipino children touched by the "Gift of Life" program supported by the Western Union Foundation.

These children, most of whom have congenital heart problems, were able to get operated on for free largely due to the combined effort of the four local agents of Western Union.

They raised as much funds as they could to support the surgeries, and every dollar donated was matched by Western Union Foundation.

In the first collection last December, the agents raised $62,000 as their target, bringing the fund to $124,000, which was enough to cover 62 operations at an average cost of $2,000 each.

The rest is history.

The rest is history: to the medicine and the diagnostic procedures because the doctors and the hospitals generally extend their services for free as part of the "Gift of Life" program.

In outing for three sick children with no hope of taking the money on their own, Brisel, Ella Pimentel Sanders, M. Ideaflor and Universal Remittent Services are no longer competitors, but fun partners.

Western Union Philippines country director Victoria Ningson says it is only in the Philippines where the different agents work together on common projects.

Aside from the 200 of Life, for instance, the agents again got together and pledged $100,000 to help the landslide victims in Guinsaugon, Southern Leyte.

The money will be used to build schools outside the land but access to encourage relocations to places in the province that are less prone to deadly landslides.

In other countries, the agents market each one individual program, which are nevertheless supported by Western Union Foundation.

Beneficiaries

The foundation was donated to the Gift of Life project for Southeast Asia, covering 8 countries so far because it is not only the child who benefits from the heart surgery but the family as well.

"When a child gets sick, every body gets affected," Ningson says. "The parents do not get to work and the expenses for other children are directed to the sick child."

"That is why these operations make a real difference to the lives of the family," Ningson adds.

She adds that there is such a sense of fulfillment when the people involved learn that the operations went on smoothly and that the children were well on their way to recovery.

It takes about 30 days for the children to recover fully from their major open-heart surgeries, although they are up and about way before then with huge smiles on their and their family's faces.

The Rotary Club of Makati-West, which started the program, takes care of screening the candidates for the free medical services.

The children should be certified as having a life-threatening sickness and by the need of financial support for them to qualify for the "Gift of Life" program.

Ningson says Western Union in the Philippines is exploring the possibility of tapping the Filipino expatriate community in other countries, such as in Singapore, for funds to expand the "Gift of Life" program.

"Basically, we are looking at how Filipinos abroad would be able to help their loved ones back in the community," Ningson says.

Western Union knows its market abroad intimately since the bulk of its income in the Philippines comes from the remittances of overseas Filipino workers sending part of their money back to their loved ones in the Philippines.

Financial literacy

Western Union estimates that nine of 10 of its transactions involve money coming in to the Philippines, as opposed to going out.

Ningson says another project that Western Union is looking to support is one involving improving financial literacy of the OFWs.

The idea is to teach them how their hard-earned money of Filipino overseas are put to good use in the Philippines, rather than squandered.

Western Union realizes that it is vital for Filipinos to be more financially responsible considering that the Philippines is the third largest receiver of remittances in the world.

Studies show that as many as 3,700 Filipinos leave to work abroad every day.

Ningson says Western Union participates in the jobs fairs here to encourage expatriated by the government to help give them an idea of what to expect when they start working abroad.

While that program is being developed, Western Union in the meantime continues to offer its customers long part of the programs to give less fortunate Filipinos a new lease on life.

As featured and Blaine, John Wayne's parents, are their wives, he indebted to the Gift of Life for changing their sick children's lives.

"I hope that they continue with their program so that they can help more people," featured actress in Filipino.

GIFT GIVERS. Foundation Patricia Ningson of Western Union, DOJ Secretary Dear Jeremy Tolomeo, Western Union marketing manager Chris Trapaga, and Gift of Life international chair Robert Gomez.

CORPORATE CITIZEN

FIGARO IN SHANGHAI. For the past year, Figaro Coffee Corp. has been marketing tea-drinking Chinese to appreciate Philippine coffee.

Banks given more time to clean up Dosri loans

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE MONETARY BOARD (MB) GIVEN BANKS more time to clean up their portfolios of loans and other credit extended to directors, officers and related interests (Dosri), which are not backed by collateral.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said in a statement yesterday that its policy-making body had approved the extension for another year, or up to April 30, 2007, of the transitory provisions of a law once-old-under that tightened the rules and regulations on Dosri.

Under the transitory provisions, sanctions for noncompliance with the Dosri rules shall not apply to outstanding loans, other credit accommodations and guarantees previously not considered as Dosri accounts but have since.

Banks were also allowed not to deduct unsecured Dosri accounts from their capital accounts for two years.

The beneficiary provisions would have expired last April 9, but the BSP said the circular was extended to "provide banks with more time within which to manage their portfolio of secured Dosri loans, other credit accommodations and guarantees."

The General Banking Law of 2000 limits banks' Dosri exposure to an amount equivalent to the borrowers' deposits and book value of their paid-in common shares in the bank.

This is why unsecured Dosri and other Dosri credit accommodations and guarantees do not exceed 10 percent of its total loan portfolio or 100 percent of its net worth, whichever is lower.

Previously, the BSP tightened the Dosri guidelines to curb excessive credit exposure that could trigger bank failures.

Specifically, the MB expanded the coverage of Dosri dealings, particularly with regards to "related interests" and likewise imposed stiff sanctions against violators.

One of the measures introduced by the BSP is the prohibition or prohibition on the bank from declaring dividends until the outstanding loans and other credit accommodations had been reduced within the prescribed ceilings.

With the tighter regulations, the BSP wants big borrowers to instead tap the domestic capital market to secure their funding requirements.

Philippine National Bank

NOTICE OF ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of Stockholders of the Philippine National Bank will be held on May 30, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. at the Ballroom, Upper Lobby, Century Park Hotel, 599 Pablo Ocampo Sr. St., Malate, Manila.

The Agenda for the meeting is as follows:

1. Call to Order
2. Secretary's Proof of Notice and Quorum
3. Approval of the Minutes of the 2005 Annual Stockholders' Meeting held on May 24, 2005
4. Report of the President on the Results of Operations for the Year 2005
5. Approval of the 2005 Annual Report
6. Approval of the Amendments to the Amended By-Laws (transfer of the position, powers and duties of the Chairman of the Board in Sections 8.1 and 8.3, Article VI captioned "Officers" to Section 5.4, Article II captioned "Board of Directors")
7. Ratification of All Acts, Resolutions and Proceedings of the Board of Directors and Corporate Officers since the 2005 Annual Stockholders' Meeting.
8. Election of Directors.
9. Appointment of External Auditor
10. Other Matters
11. Adjournment

Minutes of the 2005 Annual Stockholders' Meeting as well as resolutions of the Board of Directors from May 25, 2005 will be available for examination during office hours at the Office of the Corporate Secretary.

Only stockholders of record as of May 2, 2006 will be entitled to notice and vote at this meeting. Registration will begin at 8:00 a.m.

If you cannot personally attend this meeting, you may designate your authorized representative by submitting a PROXY to the Office of the Corporate Secretary not later than 5:00 p.m. on May 29, 2006. Any proxies so received will be validated on May 30, 2006, 9:00 a.m., at the Office of the Stock Transfer Agent at Allied Bank Center, 6754 Ayala Avenue, Makati City.

Pasay City, March 24, 2006

RENATO T. DINAMEZ
Corporate Secretary

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SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF FEED FORMS
(2nd & 3rd Quarter 2006)

GCash and RBAP strengthen mobile banking partnership

RP expects upgrade in rating to 'positive'

Government banking on VAT collection

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES EXPECTS CREDIT RATING agencies to upgrade their sovereign credit rating on the Philippines to "positive" from "stable" by the last quarter of this year or early next year.

A "positive" outlook means that the Philippines' government—currently rated at one notches below investment grade by Fitch, three notches below by Standard & Poor's and four notches below by Moody's—faces a big chance of getting a credit rating upgrade in two years.

"As long as there's no fiscal slippage, that's the key (to a positive outlook)," Nestor Pizarro, the government's chief investor relations officer, said yesterday after meeting with a visiting mission from S&P.

"All the indicators that are coming out are positive and there are no controversial issues on the political front," he said.

A sovereign credit rating reflects the agencies' view on the ability and willingness of a government to meet its debt obligations in full and on time.

Pizarro said it was too soon to expect an immediate reaction in sovereign credit rating outlook after this particular visit from S&P noting the Philippines would still have to establish a trend of good value-added tax collections.

"We have to show more traction on the fiscal sector," he said.

Asked when the Philippines was likely to see a further improvement in debt rating outlook, Pizarro said: "Maybe toward the end of this year or early next year."

He said a revision in the outlook to positive would be inevitable once the government sustains VAT revenue collections for nine months.

He said this would indicate whether the full-year targets would be met.

"In the first few months, our deficit numbers were good. It's a good anchor for saying that probably we'll be more confident than down the road, we'll meet our fiscal targets. The next critical is the VAT collection," he explained.

RBAP
Partners in Development

To date, more than prominent RBAP member banks representing 785 outlets nationwide have been accredited as GCash partners. These include Agri-Business Bank, Bangko Kabayan, Bangko Luzon, Bangko Mabuhay, Bank of Florida, Landbank Bank, LBC Bank, Visa Community Bank, Visa Metro Bank, 1st Valley Bank, Luzonian Business Bank, GSB Bank, Extensity, PBBank, Rang-Ay Bank, Rural Bank of San Francisco, Rural Bank of Antipolo, Rural Bank of Lanuza, Rural Bank of Cotabato, Rural Bank of Jaro, Rural Bank of Victorias, Sumagaysay Rural Bank, Tagbilaran Rural Bank of Dingalan, and New Cumbrada Rural Bank.

RBAP partners can look forward to more GCash possibilities in the near future, such as remote deposit capability, which allows clients to make deposits to their bank account anytime, an added bank deposit transaction, later successfully undergone after testing, and GSB rollout is expected upon approval by BSP.

For inquiries on how to become an accredited GCash partner nearest you, interested rural banks may contact RBAP at (02) 527-3946/7 or send an e-mail to: kglee@rbap.org

GLOBE

BANKING PARTNERS:

16 Mindanao cities improve service delivery, experts say

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—AT LEAST 16 Mindanao cities under the Transparent and Accountable Governance (TAG) project funded by the Asia Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have reported a significant improvement in their delivery of services.

During the second conference held here last week, officials of the TAG cities said they have recorded a notable improvement in their treasury and revenue operations, business tax administration, health, and procurement systems.

The TAG project implemented by the League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP) aims to promote transparency and accountability through reforms in beneficiary cities.

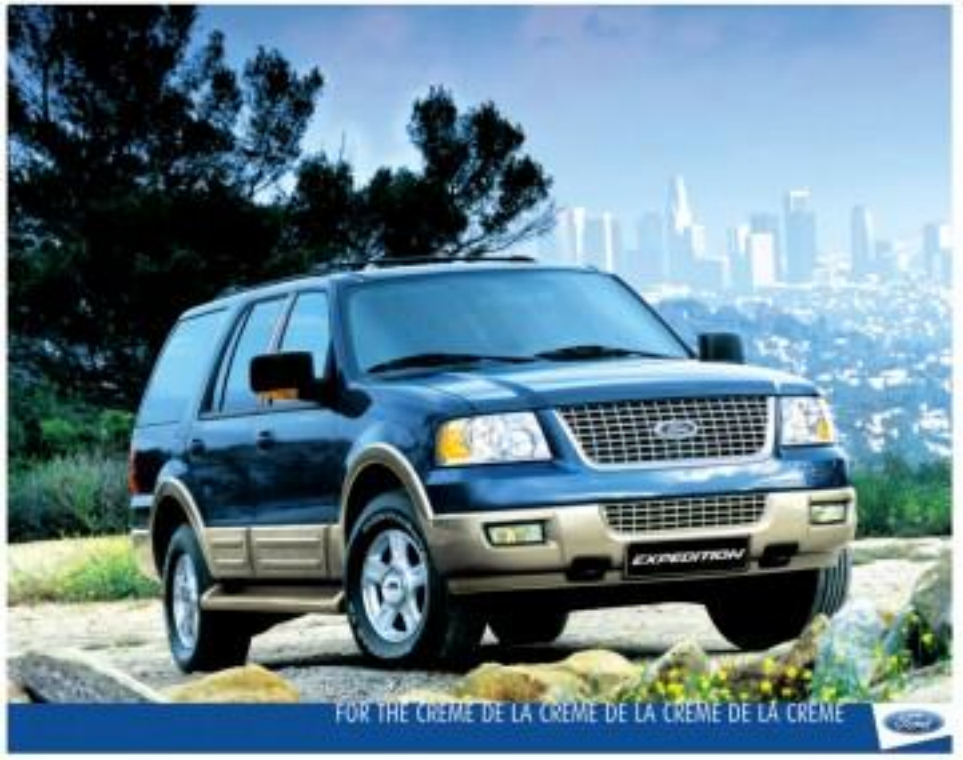
It has been going on for the past seven months in the cities of Zamboanga, Ozamis, Dinapolis, Malaybalay, Koronadal, Tacurong, General Santos, Surigao, Bigan, Samal, Tagum, Butuan, Digoing, Panabo, Mawasi and Cotabato.

Zamboanga City, for example, posted a 295.81 percent increase in revenues from about P995,000 last year to P39.5 million this year when they implemented reforms.

The procedural reforms undertaken included the reduction in the number of hours for business permits and licensing processing, introduction of a one-stop shop business processing, posting of procedural flowcharts and "other client-friendly innovations."

Baptists, which focused on improving its public market and bus terminal, reported a 21 percent increase in revenue collection.

General Santos, the first of the 16 TAG cities to print a procedural handbook, has reported positive results in its management of the Centro Médico City Hospital. Aquiles Zerda, PDI Mindanao Bureau



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LIFESTYLE

Editor-Chuchi Bandi-Formoso

PIGEON with Gaze Puree and Figlets of Rugeoisies

WEDNESDAY STYLE • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

Cooking is truly about leaving a piece of one's self in his food, the food becoming him and he, his food

PARFAIT of Duck Gland with Honey and Pistachios

Masters serve a symphony of flavors

PLEASE ENLIGHTEN ME: WHAT IS A Michelin star chef?

MARIO

Dear, Mario, in Part 2 of the May 11 column and the answer to your question.

The then Michelin Guide was a French guide on cars, car maintenance and places where those traveling cross-country can dine and lodge, initially distributed for free, it released its first edition in 1900.

This guide was the brainchild of André Michelin who, together with his brother, later figured out that nothing gains less would be taken seriously, so they decided it must be sold.

The 1926 edition started the "star" rating to indicate which establishments served fine cuisine. The two and three stars were eventually added in 1936. That began the business-not-lost book, as hardly a change from the original line. Green guides exist as well, but these are mainly in France and its regions.

Twelve

Today there are 12 guides for hotels and restaurants that cover countries such as Benelux, Italy, Germany, Scotia and Portugal, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Ireland, the "Main Cities of Europe," and, as of 2006, New York City as well as a specific guide to France.

The Michelin guide is an annual publication. To keep its standards, those who review establishments revisit them every 18 months or so. It uses a three-star system for recommending sights—three is "worth the trip"; two, "worth a detour"; one, "interesting."

For restaurants, not one is given to "a very good restaurant in its category" two stars for "excellent cooking, worth a detour" and three stars for "exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey."

The guide's gastronomic ratings have become the most famous and influential in the world. They are taken very seriously by chefs. The wider tasting is given only to a very select few. The addition or loss of a star can mean a difference in sales that run in the millions of euros.

A rated restaurant becomes a food mecca for gourmands, with reservations made months in advance if one should even be so lucky to get a booking. Its chef is a culinary demigod.

In the world of haute cuisine, and especially in the French, a ranking from Michelin or its rival, the equally prestigious Gault-Millau, is equivalent to the chef's worth in gold. A loss of a star or, for the Gault-Millau, a point is such a disgrace that, in the case of prominent French chef Bernard Loiseau, the master behind the renowned restaurant Côte d'Or in Saulieu in Burgundy, death was a better option. Rumors continue to fuel debate if it was the Gault-Millau or the Michelin that made him opt to end his life.

MAY 10 (C)

ICONIC 3-star Michelin chef Philippe Legendre

WHAT'S ON AT ROBINSONS

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SINIGANG. Kalui

Linking the regions through food

By Butch Pajarillo
Contributor

IT HAS BECOME A SORT OF ICON for Filipino food lovers. And if the influx of old and new patrons is to be a reflection of success, Gerry's Grill is definitely on top of the hill.

The joint has come a long way since founder Gerry Apolinario opened the first Gerry's Grill branch on Feb. 14, 1997 on Timog Avenue corner Eugenio Lopez Avenue in Quezon City. Now, eight years after, with 17 branches nationwide, Gerry's Grill still pokes with excitement, as it continues to polish to perfection the art of good food.

Asked what he thinks of the company's steady success, Gerry's Grill marketing manager Francis E. Villoria says he believes the restaurant is linking the Philippines through good food.

"What we offer is a good cross-section of the best dishes in the Philippines and if (somebody from) one region can appreciate a dish from another region then, in a way, the food has become instrumental in transcending cultural and ethnic boundaries," he says.

Whatever province of the Philippines one comes from, Gerry knows will always find at Gerry's a little bit of home that he or she misses. Aside from its continual quest for excellence, this element might be one of the reasons Gerry's decided to cater to Filipinos abroad.

Two branches of the restaurant are scheduled to open in the United States soon. The first is in San Francisco, tentatively scheduled to be inaugurated in December. The second US branch is in Los Angeles, due to open in February next year.

Search continues

Stagnancy is a word that does not exist in the Gerry's Grill vocabulary. Villoria says Apolinario is always on the lookout for new ways of improving and expanding their product line, deriving inspiration from his trips all over the Philippines and abroad.

In addition to its original best-sellers such as sizzling sisig, beef kare-kare, crispy pata, crabaw sa gata and inihaw baboy, Gerry's Grill has started offering a new line of delectable dishes like Tahong a la Jobee, Spicy Roll-shelled Mussels tossed in garlic and oil, Adobong Puso Ben, rice wrapped in banana leaves mixed with chicken-pork adobo, Baked Scallops, baked half-shelled scallops in a special sauce topped with garlic and melted cheese, Steamed Pinpin, pin-pin steamed served with garlic and butter sauce, topped with fresh herbs; Bagnet, crispy fried pork belly served with fresh onions and tomato salad, fish bagoong on the side, Bagoong Rice, plain boiled rice flavored with local fish bagoong and dried bay shrimps; Crab Rice, boiled rice flavored with fresh crabmeat; Veggie Rice, fresh mixed vegetables stir-fried with plain boiled rice.

High standard

At Gerry's Grill product development is just the beginning of a to-dress-for-success. The chain maintains a very high standard when it comes to the consistency of the taste and flavors of its dishes. It even runs four whole pig-roasting ovens in some of its branches to ensure that the lechon it serves is always of the highest quality.

Gerry's Grill's loyal branches are on Timog Manila, QC; Ayala, Paseo de Roxas; Makati; Jupiter Street, Makati; Greenbelt, Makati; Serendra Lifestyle Building, Makati; Ortigas, QC; Blue Wave, Manila; Malate, Manila; Mandaluyong; Subic; Baguio; Laoag; Tuguegarao; Dau, Pampanga; Bacolod; Iloilo; Cebu; Davao; Cagayan de Oro; and Gensan.

SAN FRANCISCO Coffee serves Cup of Excellence awardees.

Award-winning brew

SAN FRANCISCO COFFEE ROAST HOUSE IS 25 years of experience to offer a package of famed coffee and commitment to customer satisfaction that has turned it into one of the leaders in its field.

San Francisco Coffee serves some of the Cup of Excellence award-winning coffee beans, as well as a wide variety of specialty coffees to suit individual preferences.

In 25 years of experience in establishing and maintaining clean and well-managed retail outlets has made it one of the fastest growing companies in Asia. The coffee chain has opened branches in Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore and Tokyo, aside from Manila.

San Francisco Coffee is now serving the limited-edition Coffee Colombiano roast that has received the Cup of Excellence award.

The award selects the best coffee each year to recognize small farmers for the quality of their crop.

Philippine franchisee holder of San Francisco Coffee is the Business Ventures Inc., headed by managing directors Nilo and Katrina Limcaoco and operations manager Eustacio Nuevo.

Visit San Francisco Coffee branches at Greenbelt 4, Serendra Olympia along Makati Avenue, Ayo 1 Building in Fort Bonifacio, Robinson's Ermita, Ayala Development Bank Building in Ortigas, and in Cubao, Quezon City.

Easy recipes for buffet

BEGIN ANEW IS STARTING RESTAURANT Series featuring many pre delicious recipes.

The class includes chilling dish presentation.

May 16: Pre Senya, four different recipes (all new)—Classic Bit Roast with Mid, Garlic Loaded with Garlic Rosemin Creamed Potatoes, Italian Style with Fresh Pasta with Parmesan and Butter, Dressed with Noodles.

May 20: Pember in your home: paper cuisine and German favorites—Pember Cheese & Beef Noodles with Cluster Sauces, Rudiner Rudler, Spaetzle and Sauerbraten, Geese Schnitzel with Spaetzel, German Potato Salad, Bavarian Cream with Blueberries.

May 22: Cuisine allowed—Kare-kare in Cucumber Cubanbing Bagoong, Cantonang Tausog, Entrancing Rebolado ng Isaga, Perfect Lechon Sauce with Undressing, Bulalo-ng Sauce, Fried Fries with Homemade Skin-Italian, Camera Mongha.

May 24: Meals...Phyllo Spring Rolls, Tuna Tartar with Wasabi Cream Sauce & Salsa Fresca, Crab Tempura with Cocoa Wasabi Cream Aioli Dipping Sauce & Wasabi Cream Aioli Dipping in Wasabi Beurre De Isleau Angus Roast Beef with Honey Wasabi Crust, Wasabi Fried Rice, Salmon Belly with Brown Miso Wasabi Sauce, Wasabi Peanuts, Dessert.

Call 9285296, 9273008 or 6351362.

TARTE au Citron

SEARED King Scallop

Masters serve a symphony . . .

From page E1

KOJIN

A total of 11 stars twinkled in Singapore. Of the 11, I had the privilege of twinkling with three, labeled "Iconic Chef" on the Wasabi Gourmet Gazette. Three-star Michelin chef Philippe Legendre of Le Cinq, Four Seasons' Georges, 9 at Paris, and one-star Michelin chef Kevin Thornton of Thornton's Restaurant in Ireland. Their restaurants are a must-try at least once in your life... I had the chance to attend their workshops, watch them in action, learn from them, as well as feast on their creations.

Legendre's menu—Dublin Bay Prawns with Coriander Prisoners, Old Parmesan Cheese Lasagna St. pooni with Duis Pierre and Tuffle of Vegetables, Creamy Chocolate Mid-Biter with Cocoa Sorbet—mirrored his very being. Legendre has quite arguably French but with many influences from places he has been, people who inspire him and ingredients in season's prime—and he brings out the best in them.

The playful and artistic Irishman Thornton whipped up Seasoned King Scallop, Sugar Soup Bun, Squid Ink Sauce, Magret of Duck Glazed with Honey and Pistachios, Braised Red Cabbage, Jasmine Sauce, Farm-to-Client.

We found was a picture-perfect image of him, his plates lined, painted with dried fruit and veg, edible powders accentuated with gold and silver dust. Thornton's cuisine so prominently shows his passions for life...art, photography, for all things substantial and experimental.

Cooking is truly about hunting a piece of one's self in his food, the food becoming him and he his food. The manner and his work can never be divided, never separated.

I recall only four occasions where I actually take third bites. The time around I caught myself doing just that. I so desired for the dining experience to go on, if I had it my way, forever.

Simply put, dining with such culinary greats is all about the expression, the flavors and the subtle sensations. Their cuisine serves to be just right all of the time. Not one flavor overpowering the other, not one ingredient out of place, never quite whole without the other.

It is a symphony in play, to read minutes, creating each mouth-we were wanting moment that I shall carry on in palatal memory for a lifetime.

With an appetite decadently satisfied, I then sat down and listened to gustatory wisdom...

E-mail the author at tagscue@inquirer.com.ph

DUBLIN Bay Prawns with Coriander Prisoners, Old Parmesan Cheese Lasagna and, at left, Creamy Chocolate Mid-Biter with Cocoa Sorbet

IT'S TIME FOR HER TO GO TO SCHOOL.

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FRESH Bar's Caesar Salad

A new level of dining

ONE of the many cheesecakes from Cheesecake Etc.

Here are eight more reasons to go to Greenbelt 3

By Pam Pastor

FOR MONTHS, WE WAITED FOR the good things that Greenbelt 3 was cooking up behind its boarded-up walls.

When the boards were taken down and dining once upended, we were treated to a gastronomic feast, from flavorful Phad Thai and heavenly fish and chips to low-slip refills and ice cream customized to suit one's tastes—Greenbelt's Level 3 offered our yearning adventure aplenty.

"We have a wide array of food choices for a totally new and exciting dining experience. With this unique mix, we offer more than the usual. We're confident that our new Level 3 will be a big hit for people who like to have fun on the days when they want to chill out and unwind," said Myrla Hernandez, senior division manager for Ayala Malls.

Eight new food outlets, eight new sources of palate pleasers, eight more reasons to go to Greenbelt 3.

Blue Ginger

The food: Thai street food

Must-order: Phad Thai, Tom Pla Dok Sru (Catfish with Green Mango Salad), Khao Hok Kapi (Shrimp Paste Fried Rice), Ba Pia Tod (Spring Rolls), Tom Yung Goong and Khao Nieo Mamuang (Sticky Rice with Mangoes).

Bonus: The lightning good and gives you a warm glow, making Blue Ginger a great place for dates.

Go when... you're in the mood for spice and when you're craving for Phad Thai.

Fish & Co.

The food: Seafood, glorious seafood

Must-order: The Best Fish & Chips in Town. We cannot stress that enough. The fish and chips. It's perfect...light, crispy and fresh, served on a bed of fries or rice...your choice. Try the Seafood Platter (for 2) platter of seasoned fish, calamari and tiger prawns), Hearty Pacific and New England Clam Chowder. The dessert are a treat, too...their Sinful Chocolate Fudge Cake with Vanilla Ice Cream is to die for.

Bonus: You never will lament you ate Endomondo after the meal—more comfy that they belong to Jesse Robredo's office.

Go when... you're in the mood for seafood and when you want to watch your

Bicol Ginger's Shrimp Paste Fried Rice

table the exertion of eating fish.

Virtual visit: www.fish-co.com

National Sports Grill

The food: American favorites and grilled goodies

Must-order: Top Spin Tenderloin (seasoned tenderloin topped with mushroom gravy sauce served with buttered rice and corn on the cob), Fish N' Mushroom (chopfried fish fillet topped with sautéed mushrooms and melted mozzarella cheese, served with fries), nuts on the rails and onion tanzo sauce) and the San Francisco Burger (on this sourdough pumpernickel bread with lettuce, tomato, pickle chips, cheese, grilled onions and Montreal sauce).

Bonus: If you order nuts (nuts that come with chips), you get free chip refills. And there's a billiard table just outside

SEAFOOD Platter from Fish & Co.

NBI where you can have fun with your friends while enjoying your drinks.

Go when... you're with friends (the servings are big) and when an exciting game is on so you can enjoy your food among cheering fans.

Virtual visit: www.nationalsportsgrill.ph

Cheesecake, Etc.

The food: Cheesecakes, pastas and sandwiches

Must-order: Café de Leon, Belgian Double Cream, Mango Bruleé, Sugar-Free Cappuccino, Sugar-Free Choco Berry, Low-Fat Sugar-Free Lemon

Bonus: There's a wide variety of drinks to choose from, too.

Go when... you want to have a light meal and when you're in the mood for great desserts.

Cold Rock

The food: Ice cream from Australia and about 30 fruits, nuts, blender and choco-lates you can choose from to make your

HEALTHY choices from Fusion

own ice cream concoction.

Must-order: Choco Mint with Brownie, Banana Bucket with Nutella, Strawberry with Pound Cake, Coffee with Tim Tams, Aussie Nutella with Cookie Dough and Tia Maria with Oreo

Bonus: Watch as your chosen ingredients are mixed into the ice cream flavor of your choice on a slab of cold rock. And yeah, they have bite-size offerings, too.

Go when... you want a cool ice cream experience.

Virtual visit: www.coldrock.com.au

Fresh Bar by Big Chill

The food: Fresh fruit shakes and more

Must-order: Avocado, Banana Mango, Banana Strawberry, Strawberry Mango—there's all good.

Bonus: Our favorite fruit shake now now offers healthy food choices—light pasta, soups, salads and sandwiches.

Go when... you're missing the beach (one sip of their Banana Mango shake and you're transported to Boracay) and when you want a healthy meal.

Fusion

The food: Smoothies and more

Must-order: Very Berry Good (strawberries, raspberries, blueberries), What's Up Doc (carrots, oranges, bananas), Pa-Mango (mangoes, peaches, bananas), The Tiger (smoothies are good too, if you want a kick, Very Barley Nice (vodka, pineapple, banana, yogurt and Baileys), Indigo Conspiracy (rum, raspberry liqueur, pineapple, yogurt and blueberries), Every

COLD Rock's ice cream concoctions

TOP Spin Tenderloin from National Sports Grill

1 MIX together sugar, lemon juice and fresh carabao's milk. Then, in a large roasting tin (pinsa) or deep saucepan, pour the milk-sugar mixture.

2 COOK mixture over medium heat, constantly stirring for 40 hour. Do not leave the mixture unattended because it scorches fast.

3 ALLOW mixture to cool and cool. Cook for a half hour more or until the mixture forms a solid mass. Remove from fire and transfer to a dry clean bowl to cool.

4 WHEN mixture is cool, form into balls or logs according to your desired size.

San Miguel's sweet delight

Text by Yungie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Roger Cuejio

THEY COME IN A VARIETY of shapes and sizes—first in white paper, then in thin and transparent Japanese paper, as partly folded as the ends. Sometimes multicolored tissue wrappers that look like paper faces are used.

STEP BY STEP

This each in your mouth pastry coated in sugar is soft, creamy, smooth and rich in taste. Made only from fresh carabao's milk and sugar, Pastillas de Leche is simply San Miguel, Batangas's pride.

Pastillas making has been a cottage industry in San Miguel for something like 120 years, according to the town's Mayor Edmundo "Yoyo" Buencamino, who is on his first term.

"San Miguel's pastillas making has been handed down from generations to generations," he said. "It has been the town's source of livelihood, sending to college many students and financing the building of little homes, and keeping big bakeshops in Manila steadily supplied."

The sweet flew over Pastillas Festival in the province exercised the tremendous clout their products were well accepted and patronized not only in the country, but also internationally, a factor in postulating economy build-buyers.

Buencamino said San Miguel's pastillas was well-received when it was brought to last year's Panaad Bakeras in Bacolod, Iloilo, Las Vegas, Nevada.

"We brought about 17 baggage of pastillas and they were all

5 ROLL strips on sugar.

6 WRAP pastillas in wax paper and cover with Japanese paper.

7 YOU may also transfer mixture into a plastic container.

sold out," Buencamino proudly reported. In September, San Miguel's pastillas will grace the international festival at Las Angeles Convention Center.

Secret

The secret to the pastillas is the freshness of the carabao's milk, which is pasteurized immediately upon delivery from individual farmers in Bulacan.

Pastillas making can be very tedious. You need to get the fresh cut milk, cooking over a slow fire and stirring constantly it takes hours to solidify," Buencamino said.

Milk and sugar are boiled to produce curd. Bankers then cooled and formed by hand into bite sized logs that are often rolled in more granulated sugar before they are individually packed in paper or cellophane. Some commercially made pastillas take a "shortcut" by adding condensed milk. Cooking is faster but the result is extra sweet.

The pastillas' shelf life is 12-15 days at room temperature and two to three weeks when refrigerated.

Here, Buencamino demonstrates how to make Pastillas de Leche in large volume.

Ingredients:
Fresh carabao's milk
Granulated white sugar
Additional granulated sugar for coating
Lemon juice

For suggestions, e-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph

PASTILLAS de Leche

Ice cream and other concoctions

THE NESTLE Creamery in Quezon City's active street parlor for the whole family and botanic its specialties include all-time favorites like Banana Split, Bore Float, Mocapino Fondue Medley. It also has ice cream cakes (Tiramisu, Eskimo Decadence, Banana Split Pie, Mango Ice Cream Pie), and mobile ride-on ice cream (pastry chef cream different types of fillings/custards to make ice cream concoctions creamery, Sundaes, cobblers and parfaits include Cilo or Banana Cream Parfait, Eskimo, Vanilla Rocher, UFO, Choco Mint, Wilbi, Fruity Choc-Bloc, Cherry Cheesecake Parfait, Strawberry Dream Parfait and Mango Berry Crepe. The Nestle Creamery also serves hot meals. Birthday and special packages are being offered. The Nestle Creamery is a joint venture of Nestle Corporation and Metro Grind. Call 410-7272/8662.

COOL off with this Periscania and Bistro's bottomless fruit shakes in watermelon, cantaloupe, mango and dalandan flavors. Get a tall, cold glass for only P-95 (, refillable with any flavor. Try the new flavors of Bisco's popular Macarons de Paris in cantaloupe, pina colada and passion and, instead of the usual chocolate cake, have freshly baked cakes with buttercream or sweet vanilla pastry cream filling. Bon Patisserie and Bistro are at G/F, Greenhills S.H. Mezzanine 4, Ayala Center, Makati; The Promenade, Greenhills; and G/F, Cotts Dela Paloma, Alabang Town Center. Call 7570822 (349) or 81 (345). Visit www.bonpatisserie.com

SARALAMBE

Dencio's offers Sunsdaeng concoctions for the hot season—Halo-halo in regular and mini portions, Ginumis Sago's Gulamans, Mais con Hielo and Kalut Pandan. Dencio's Halo-halo contains ube, ube, langka, beans and tiny tripioca laced with milk and topped with crushed ice and leche flan. Dencio's has outlets in Rockwell, Powerwalk, Eastwood, Lotus Center, Grand Alabang, Subic, Bonifacio Bay, CCP Complex, Ayala Center, Bacolod, Camp John Hay, Cashbang, Capitol Hills, Jupiter, Las Pilas, Pasay Center, Robinsons Ermita, SM Megamall, Paseo de Magallanes and SM Baguio.

Dimsum class May 30

LEARN TO MAKE YOUR FAVORITE dim sum at San Miguel Pure Foods Culinary Center's special cooking class, "All About Dimsum," 1:30-4:30 p.m., May 30.

The class will be handled by top chefs from Subuo Dimsum Restaurant and will cover items from Mr. Pao Siopao to other popular dim sum.

Registration fee is P800. A 20 percent discount will be given to members of My Great Deal Club. Visit www.mygreatdeal.ph.com or call 637 0975, loc. 402, 403 or 405.

Healthy food cafe

From page C4

Next

CHROME Place's Xin Fan di presents "London Nodes" by master chef, Sun Lee, until May 31. Ten "Seven Corner's Champagne and Sparkles," champagne and sparkling wines at P1, percent discount on a perfect accompaniment to the international brunch buffet every Sunday of May. 11 a.m. - 7:30 p.m. Call 832 7222 loc. 7390 and 7206.

ST. MARK'S offers Pizza Fro, topped with anchovies, mushrooms and pepperoni and the Meat Inclusive Pizza with Italian sausage, pepperoni, mushrooms, green peppers, onions, garlic, chicken and tomatoes. At Mark's pizzas are complemented with appetizers, soups, pastas, main dishes and desserts. At Mark's branches are located at the 2/L, Greenbelt 3, Tomas Morato, The Block Rockwell and Commonwealth. Call 5555554 or 7.8.1 FRIDAY'S recently launched a medley of rib platters. Sherry Fresh Friday's full-flavored pork ribs served with potatoes steam called Ber Ribs Platter and Pork Chop. Then there's the Ribs Platter and BF Steak served with choice aged beef, the Friday's Ribs Platter and Chicken, a combination of tender pork ribs and juicy chicken. Try the Ribs Platter and Shrimp and delight in the with pork ribs goodness combined with succulent shrimp skewers. Lack of those now rib platters are spicy seasoned and marinated with signature home grown flavors, basted with Friday's very own Jack Daniel's glaze and served with fresh grilled corn on the cob. The Friday's Rib Platters are available until June 30 at 1/G, 11 Friday's branches in Greenbelt 3, Makati, Robinsons Place Manila, Hotel Nentenaall in Tomas Morato, Eastern City, Alabang Town Center, and Sta. Lucia East.

CRUSTASIA'S Emperors' Buffet offers Spacious Crab and seafood selection. Crustasia is on 2/F, Podium, 18 ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, and at G/L, Bacloud Power Plant Mall, Makati City. Call 7283461 and 6110857.

RED CRAB SURF AND TURF OFFERS

Crabs and Rib Fingers, Crab Morbois, grilled US-rib fingers, garlic pasta sauteed vegetables;

and Hawaiian Prawns and Rib Fingers, grilled prawns and pineapple salsa with grilled US-rib fingers, pancetta salad, sauteed vegetables.

Every order comes with a free stuffed top. Red Crab branches are at 12/F Benavidez St., Makati, /B4 Tomas Morato, QC; 3/F, Starts de las Palmas, Alabang Town Center, and G/F, Shangri-La Mall, Ortigas. Call 4009100.

Healthy food café

CHAMOFI, A TEA, COFFEE AND FOOD specialty store and café, opens at the Mall of Asia. Offering a healthy line of drinks and dishes, it will serve its "Tarlinas" with green tea polyphenols, an ingredient that reputedly helps the body deal with oxygen- free radicals, which can cause certain diseases and hasten the aging process.

"tea sun as sweetener an extract from the stevia herb from Paraguay that is supposed to be high in energy. The café will also serve a variety of snacks and light meals. Gift packs of Chamofi tea and coffee products will also be available. Visit www.chamofi.com

DINING OUT

THE INGREDIENTS

spread features all-time Filipino favorites, such as Adobo, Lumpia and Sinigang on rice. Instead, Bibingka and Kirsten Pritzzel, Leche, Bagoong and Pinakbet (Tinola); Chicken Relleno and Pork Fantasha (Balsamic Pesapal, Laing and Bicol Express (Bicol). Desserts include Pastillas, Halohalo, Bibingka and Rato Rato. Available every Sunday until Friday, 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. or 7:00+. A la carte menu is also available all day, every day. Favorites that Ed Serina creates Grilled Chicken and Prawns in Spicy Coconut Milk is complement the chef's a la carte menu choices this month. The chef's recommendation is part of the Richmonde Dining menu, available 10a.m.-11 p.m. Call 5557777 loc. 3408 or 5556614.

HOLIDAY Inn Galleria Manila will feature one of the world's most exotic cuisines, Moroccan, alongside the international buffet selections at Rajdoot Cafe, 12 noon-2:30p.m., daily. Dishes include couscous, glumped samosa grand, dolmas, a three-layer **are wrapped in** filo **minced** of pastry, **mashed**, lentil **roasted** lamb, **and** dips smoked, roasted chicken with olives and harissa. Enjoy the Mystic Moroccan buffet at P500+ per person. For reservations call 8337111 loc. 1318.

MAKATI Shangri-La presents the Dragon Boat Festival, May 28-June 11. Chef Toong will prepare traditional delicacies like Dim Chong Chong and the sweet Kee Chai Chong. Indulge in native **cuisine** pastries at Shang Palace at the a la carte dishes. Call 8138888, 8138 588, 8151589.

CENTURY Park Sheraton's Café in the Park serves family lunch or dinner buffet for P888 per adult and P300 for children 4-12 years old. At Mount Japanese Restaurant, a meal is available for P1,200. Call +(632)521-170 or e-mail hostbar@century-park.com.ph

THE MARINA Pearl Bay Hotel's Portside restaurant offers the following dishes: Pan Seared Red Scallops and Rosemary Beans, Pumpkin Cream with Apple Smoked Bacon Bits; Sea Bass Tuna and Blue Tapenade Fettuccini; Baked Lamb Loin "Pie Hardee" with Grilled Vegetables or Pan Roast Prawns on Mushroom Ravioli with French Goat Cheese. Crispy Tropical Fruit Tart and White Chocolate Ice cream, a la carte. P1,350++ per person. Call 5251212 loc.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

LIFESTYLE

Iloilo cooking by a young chef

While confident of her Continental cuisine know-how, she had to study the food of her province to do it correctly

PAULINE Corrinna-Banzing Barggo chef

PAULINE GORRICETA-BASUstng won in her white chef's uniform as she welcomed guests to the opening of "Manamit," the Ilonggo food festival at the Mandarin Oriental Manila. A young Filipino chef cooking her homegrown cuisine? Years ago, it would have been unlikely.

Aspiring chefs mostly study Continental cuisine, even other Asian cooking, but never our own.

Pauline, herself, is an example, attending the best schools—Culinary Institute of America, New School of New York and the Institute of Culinary Education (formerly Peter Kump's). Leaving toward Italian cooking, she opened Al Dente Restaurante Italiano in Iloilo. She also manages a seafood restaurant, a bistro and a catering service in the city.

But while confident of her Continental cuisine know-how, she felt she had to study the food of her province just to be sure she would do it correctly for this festival. Her mother, a veteran of the restaurant business managing her food joints called Ybis Bist, taught her how to go about it.

Country Cooking

Micky Jimeno

Learning from masters

The advice was to learn from the masters. Per butchay, it was the old man (she doesn't know his name) who prepared the dish daily at Ilaya. She went to the market an hour in the morning. Lives in one of the stalls is known for the signature Iloilo soup dish with slices of pork and tomato and chili noodles. She was told to talk. On more carefully about the process, for what commercial cook would give secrets away?

Pauline says among the carefully observed secrets is using Maya-Maya, a monosodium glutamate (MSG) sold at the La Inglesida grocery. She mentioned the phrase or if I know them. But yes, I had been to Iloilo and had eaten in Ilaya and Ted's, premier Iloilo/ay providers. I will get to that grocery some day. As the hotel would not let her use MSG, she said they usually good beef stock.

The other secret to the Iloilo/ay is guinamos (fermented fish) in a tasua bag, mashed about to give added flavor.

From the butchay table, we took a tour of the food as she announced. It was an insight as well on hotel requirements in presenting local cuisine.

She pointed out the pinamalhan, fish cooked in vinegar and tomatoes, the Iloilo paksiw. It's supposed to be Antique, she said, but the local seafood is done with calamon. Most have nourishing roots with the bones.

Surprised

We laughed at how the expat chefs were surprised that she cooked the kinaguan sa lubot (steamed prawns) in 7-Up. They do have to learn that the "secret" does make whatever you cook with it lubotigas, inasmuch, barbecue) sweeter.

A big steamer contained fresh oysters. Pauline says oysters are steamed rather than boiled in Iloilo. There were fresh scallops as well. Her food styling tension came in the how as she added green mango shreds on top to dress up the essentially plain but really wonderful shellfish.

When we talked of adobo, she included a cooking lesson in point on how different they did it in Iloilo. It starts with crushing garlic, onion and meat. Next, bay leaf, peppercorns, cubans (for color) and, most important, annatto, the local vinegar, are added. A little sugar tempers the vinegar and finishes the dish.

Grunsul is an integral part of cooking in Iloilo. Aside from flavoring food in the cooking, it's a must-dip that chicken meat (cut-roasted) can't do without. This coconut vinegar is mixed in with garlic, sliling labuyo, peppercorns and bagoong/patis (ginger, galangal) that is supposed to lend flavor and smell that it isn't allowed aboard an airplane. A huge sigean the Iloilo airport says so.

Another dish she had to learn was the tinu-an, chicken wrapped in banana leaves then steamed in its own juice. The traditional way of cooking it inside a big bamboo stalk making sure the banana leaf is tied tightly so the juices don't escape.

She shooed down the old way by placing a sample beside the chafing dish containing the tinu-an. When she was tasting this dish, some told her to add more flavors or to make it tangier. But she relied on the memories of a former who worked for her father.

In demand

The dish that couldn't be replicated fast enough was the grilled manogat. It's a mangrove fish, a jack snapper. The brackish waters explains its delicious flavor and texture—soft, white and fatty flesh.

The broth on the appetizer buffet were totally not inside. There were pancit (empanada) of mango sprouts and lechon/pig's ulnar. Congy soldiers were present probably because they are so identified with Ilonggo cooking.

Notably the dessert table. It had the most interesting offerings even if you didn't have a sweet tooth. Pauline pointed to the bar-bar, pinipig cooked in coconut milk, which she said she learned from specialists in Iloilo. She promised the wouldn't cook it for business.

It was wonderful, to see and eat the classics the panyos candy. Dim slices of green papaya preserved in sugar then formed into petals with creamy yema in them. Pauline said she candy was from Passi, Iloilo, that had many sugar mills. Soooo, many sweets were invented there.

There were colored bocayo (macaroon) coconut strips) and small, triangle pieces that contained strips of young coconut. Being passed around on the first day was a basket filled with pieces of buttercorch, yema and cinnamon. A taster of each led to a second helping to take home.

Every day, Pauline works the room, many guests are friends from college and some, Ilonggos who have settled here, anyone who goes to the Cayuna's Bar is invited to sample Iloilo delicacies.

She smiled as she related how a group of Iloilo/ay finished off their bowl of bacalay. But a Filipino with a foreign guest opted for Continental food. Tsk, Pauline said, how can some people remind me even in the food.

Manamit/Iloilo Food Festival is on every lunch until May 31 at the Cafe Mezzanine, Mandarin Oriental Manila, Makati City.

E-mail the author at pinoyfood04@yahoo.com

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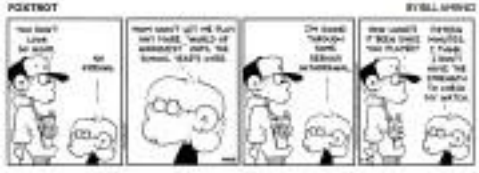
POSTNUP — BY BILL AMEND



A LUPIN — BY JESS ABROA

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DAILY CROSSWORD

KIKO MACHINE — BY HANS ABROA

LOKENOTS — BY ELIZABETH CHONG-D

TULDOK — BY RAFU AMID SETUH MUHAMMAD

TEA-CURED salmon with pickled ginger and cucumber (green onion) dressing

The art of good living, Aussie-style

Culinary, winemaking, visual and musical arts were well represented during a dinner at the ambassador's home

CHED'S Carlos and Aimee Miguel

EMMA O'Reilly of Bodegas and Bouchard winery

AUSTRALIAN Ambassador Tony Holy with cruise trade commissioner Alan Martel, the ambassador's wife Wendy Jeffery and Miss Edwards of Edwards Wines, welcome guests.

By Michaela Fenix

WINES, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY are good, make for livelier company.

And so the small dinner party at the residence of the Australian ambassador Tony Holy hosted by Alan Martel, senior trade commissioner, had the walls resounding with talk and laughter from the moment cocktails were served.

The talkers featured that evening were from Western Australia, in the favored area known as Margaret River Perth, the capital, should be mentioned in geo-centric geographic parlance.

Emma O'Reilly represented a winery with the playful name of Bodegas and Bouchard. The wine conversant with the formal winery name of the Old World (read: French and Italian).

STRAWBERRY parfait

Mike Edwards represented his company, Edwards Wines, where he is not only owner but also winemaker.

All their wines are available locally at the Wine Depot.

We were all greeted with a cool light Australian Sauvignon Blanc '05 from Bodegas and Bouchard. This was served with a duck and chicken liver parfait with a covering of pure wine jelly. It left a complementing echo after.

That was the first offering from chefs Carlos and Aimee Miguel, who did lunch or blending food with wine. The Miguel brothers studied culinary arts in Australia but have since settled in their home country to cook for small parties.

Before dinner was served, chit-of-wine-conversed involved the delightful played by a foremost musical artist, Troy Bramell. The traditional musical instrument, made from the bark of a tree and decorated with aboriginal art, was able to approximate any sound as you yourself wanted.

After setting the Australian mood with delightful music and some tastes of Australian white around the cultural area, an intimate bundle of Idaho tenderloin was served. Appetizer was tea-cured salmon with pickled ginger and cucumber (green onion) dressing. A must-fall-loaded Richwith Sauvignon Blanc '05 was paired with the salmon. According to Edwards, sauvignon blanc is the new chardonnay. The winemaker uses the grapes for this wine shouldn't be too ripe.

A fish dish came next, Barramundi with green lentils and a reminder-salad. It was paired with, from Bodegas and Bouchard, Rio Chenoy Chardonnay Semillon Sauvignon Blanc '05. The Chenoy it was explained, was a children's game. The combination of three grape varietals made the taste long list produced a citrus apple flavor.

O'Reilly says there is just a bit of chardonnay in this mix and the blending of semillon and sauvignon blanc is characteristic of Margaret River wines.

Braised lamb shank with mustard pea risotto was not as heavy as one thought it would be. Alanbic the wine, an '02 vintage Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot, helped. It was elegant and quite delicate rather than robust.

As is their style, the Miguel brothers informed diners about every course. They said the strawberry and cointreau parfait was straight from the recipe book because it never failed them. It was a great dessert to finish our cabernet sauvignon, as well.

The evening was an experience in the art of good living, indeed. Culinary, winemaking, visual and musical arts were well represented.

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Clean and green fiestas

By Linda B. Bolido

THE CONSUMER

FIESTAS ARE held all year round throughout the Philippines.

But such revelry not only mean food, merrymaking and revelry but also waste—a lot of it, in fact—the way they are traditionally celebrated. From food packaging to booklets to fireworks, fiestas mean a lot of trash to be dealt with the morning after. They also use up a lot of water and electric.

Ivy and rain cause severe rents in the environment.

The Ecological Waste Coalition of the Philippines (Ecowaste Coalition) says a mountain of trash mentioned by the inevitable consequence of fiestas. It offers tips on how to waste and recycle during celebrations.

For instance, instead of plastic and other inorganic materials for decoration, consumables can use things that can be reused, recycled or composted like locally available biodegradable materials.

Plastic and other greenery are more ecofriendly than plastic streamers, bunting or balloons. At the end of the festivities, decorations should be removed, washed and stored so they can be reused.

Recycling stations may be put up where people can bring their trash for exchange. To this many people grant responsibility for their arrangements, organizers should add "restaurant parcels" that will assist in the ecological management of the city.

Food consumptions and vendors should be encouraged to use reusable or biodegradable alternatives like banana leaves, instead of disposable containers and utensils.

To precautions, candles which do not yield excessive soot and are not likely to reburn your substances like lead should be used. Better yet, reduce the need for candles by holding the procession in daylight. The use of firecrackers or pyrotechnics that adversely affect air quality should be minimized.

The menu should be carefully planned. Food should only be sufficient for expected guests. Meals and drinks should be served in reusable containers.

Condiments should be bought in bulk and stored in reusable bottles, shakers or dispensers. Cloth napkins that can be washed and used again are better than paper.

Instead of soda, offer water or healthy drinks like tangkal, buko with pandan, or sarsiket with calamansi.

Excess food should be shared with neighbors and people in need of adequate and nutritious food.

Discarded food should be treated for animal consumption or composting. Waste should be segregated and recycled. Discarded items should not be mixed, dumped or burned.

For more information, contact the Ecowaste Coalition at 9290376 or e-mail Manny Calonzo at mannycalonzo@lycos.com.

Feedback

Reader Pendrie Pilacas wants to commend SC Johnson & Son for superb customer service. She said she bought a single Glade Magic Gel Decor 150g Cool Lime and kept it in storage. But, when it was time to use it, she found the container empty.

She called the company only wanting to inform them of the problem. The company's Quality Assurance Department readily replaced the item on just with one but two pieces. Commendable indeed!

Meanwhile, Cresser C. Guillermo, manager of the SM North Edsa branch, sent a letter of apology to reader Grace V. Ramos for the rude behavior of two department store employees. Guillermo assured Ramos the employees had been warned that they faced disciplinary action if the incident was repeated.

Ramos complained that her sister was laughed at and made fun of by the employees. She said: "This is the second time my sister experienced this from SM Department Store's staff." She added that her sister had a heart problem and she was concerned that such ridicule could be too stressful on to endanger her health.

Personal note

I beg the readers' indulgence as I add this personal note. Class 1967 of the Bishop Gabriel Reyes High School (now National Comprehensive High School) will have a 40th anniversary reunion May 19-20, 2007. Members of Class '67 may call or text Marina Ocampo Mercolay, 09 10-3595281; and Evelyn (Martinez) Eduardo, 0928 356 1488 or 4364994.

Vito regular columnist, Marietta V. Glove, is indisposed. Please send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, China Banco Ave. cor. Maaralin and Bgy. 761, Makati City; PO Box 2153 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati; or e-mail lbolido@inq7.net.ph —editor

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